HULK

MAESTRO

BY
PETER DAVID

KEOWN LAND
PERALTA
PÉREZ PINA

MARVEL

HULK

MAESTRO

BY

PETER DAVID

HULK MAESTRO

PETER DAVID
WRITER

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HULK CREATED BY
STAN LEE & JACK KIRBY

JENNIFER GRÜNWALD
COLLECTION EDITOR

DANIEL KIRCHHOFFER
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MAIA LOY
ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR

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VP PRODUCTION & SPECIAL PROJECTS

JAY BOWEN
BOOK DESIGNER

DAVID GABRIEL
SVP PRINT, SALES & MARKETING

TIM SMITH 3
SR. MANAGER, DIGITAL

JASMINE ALVAREZ & RACHEL YOUNG
DIGITAL PRODUCTION

C.B. CEBULSKI
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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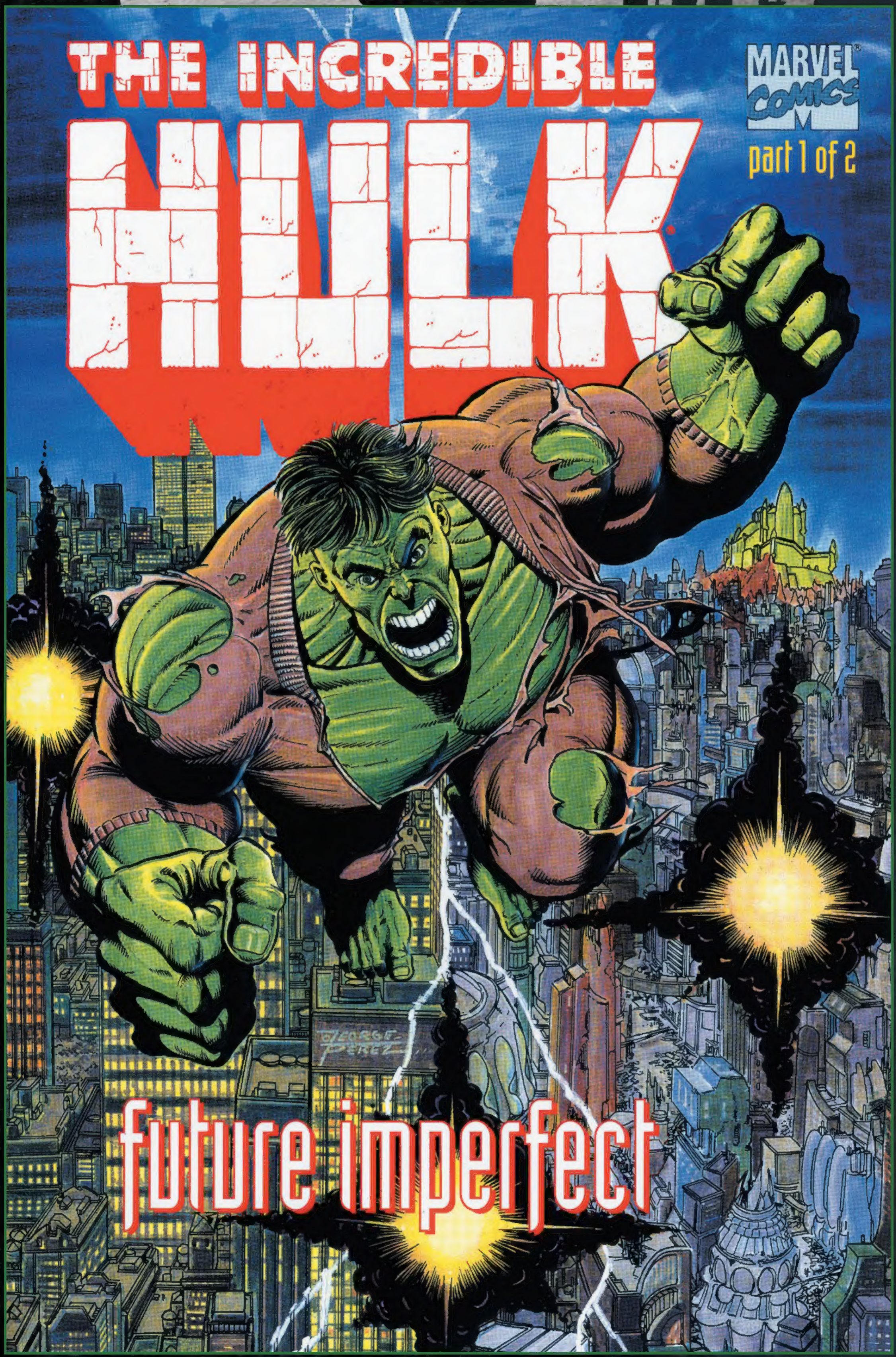
THE INCREDIBLE HULK

MARVEL COMICS

part 1 of 2



future imperfect

GEORGE PEREZ

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

future imperfect

part 1 of 2

PETER DAVID	GEORGE PEREZ	TOM SMITH	JOE ROSEN
writer	artist	colorist	letterer

BOBBIE CHASE	MATTHEW MORRA	TOM DeFALCO	DAWN GEIGER
editor	assistant editor	editor in chief	designer

[redacted]

"Future Imperfect"

WELCOME TO DYSTOPIA, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!
YOU'VE WALKED HERE!
YOU'VE RIDDEN HERE!
YOU'VE CRAWLED HERE!
BUT THE BOTTOM LINE IS... YOU'RE HERE!
AND OH, WHAT WONDERS AWAIT YOU! FEAST YOUR EYES ON SOME OF THE LOVELY LADIES WHO CAN BE YOURS!
BUT IF YOU WANT TO FEAST MORE THAN YOUR EYES, WELL... THAT, MY FRIENDS, WILL COST YOU!
ACID SALE
HEY! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE SHOVING!
NO ARMS NO LEGS NO SAUCE
REMEMBER THE MAESTRO IS... WATCHIN YOU
THAT'S TOO EXPENSIVE.
I'VE NEVER SEEN ONE OF THESE. WHAT DID IT USED TO DO?
IT'S CALLED A "CD." YOU THROW IT.
I SHOULD CALL THE AUTHORITIES.
THIS IS SPOILED.
YOU CALL YOURSELF A VENDOR.
THAT'S OUTRAGEOUS.
HOW MUCH WOULD YOU PAY?
LET'S TALK.
LIMBS 'R' US
CAN'T BELIEVE IT.
DO YOU HAVE IT IN PINK?
ONLY WHAT YOU SEE HERE.
JANIS! JANIS! WAIT UP!
DID'JA SLIDE IT TO THEM? DID'JA?
HELLO?
IT'S NEVER BEEN USED. MAKE ME AN OFFER.
WHY DON'T YOU DROP DEAD.
MAKE ME A BETTER OFFER.
PIZFIZ! OVER HERE! AND FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, SHUT UP!
JUST IGNORE HIM. PRETEND HE'S WITH SOMEONE ELSE.
LOUD-MOUTHED FOOL'S GOING TO GET US ALL KILLED SOMEDAY.
DON'T BE ARCH, DAKORD. PIZFIZ LOVES THE WAY OF THINGS, IS ALL.

DID'JA *SLIDE* IT? *DIDJA?*

IT'S BEEN SLID, PIZFIZ. THEY'RE IN THE KNOW.

NOW *GRIP* IT.

I *KNOW* HOW HIGH ON IT YOU ARE, BUT YOU GOTTA RE-MEMBER THE *CREDO.*

GO SLOW. LOW PROFILE. DON'T ATTRACT AT-TENTION BY ACTING OVER THE *TOP.*

THIS IS ALLTOO *BIZARRE*, JANIS. I'LL BELIEVE IT WHEN I SCAN HIM *MYSELF.*

WAIT'LL YOU DO. JUST *WAIT'LL.*

IT'S JUST THAT I'VE BEEN WATCH-ING MY BACK AGAINST THE MAES-TRO TOO LONG TO BELIEVE THIS *STUDLY* YOU'VE RE-TRIEVED IS GOING TO *CHANGE* THINGS.

ONE SIDE, PEASANTS.

FLARK YOU! THINGS ARE GONNA BE *DIFFERENT* AROUND HERE! SOONER THAN YOU *THINK!*

WILL YOU *SHUT UP!* STOP MOUTHING! YOUR BOASTING'S GOING TO GET US ALL *KILLED!*

ARE YOU COM-*PLETELY* DIM?

THE GRAVITY POLICE ARE *EVERYWHERE.* YOU CAN'T DRAW ATTENTION TO YOURSELF.

ONE MINUTE YOU'D BE MIND-ING YOUR OWN BUSINESS, AND THE NEXT THING IT'S--

BLAK

DAKORD!

IT'S THE GRAVITY POLICE! THEY'VE *TWEAKED* US!

STAY WHERE YOU ARE!

YOU HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS INSURGENTS JANIS, PIZFIZ, SKOOTER AND DAKORD.

WE HAVE DISPATCHED DAKORD AS A *WARNING* TO THE REST OF YOU TO SURRENDER IMMEDIATELY.

ANY OR *ALL* OF YOU CAN BE DISPATCHED AS EASILY.

SHRAK

SHRAK

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU CAUGHT HER *UNREADY!*

NO! WE'RE OUTGUNNED! *FALL BACK!*

THIS IS FOR DAKORD, YOU FLARKS!

YOU HAVE BEEN *WARNED.*

ZAAKOW

ARRHHHH!!!

I *LOVE* THIS JOB.

JUST KEEP THE FLOAT BOAT *STEADY*, WILL'YA?

SKOOTER! OH, *FLARK!*

THIS BITES ALL. HERE WE'VE GOT THE STUDLY STASHED, TOLD HIM TO *WAIT* FOR US...

...AND NOW WE'RE BEING CUT TO PIECES WHILE HE'S COOLING HIS *FEET.*

R-FLAM

GOTTA GET THE GRAV COPS TO WHERE HE *IS.* ONLY HOPE *LEFT.*

OVER HERE!
HEY! GRAV COPS!
SCAN THIS, WHY DON'T YOU?!
EEYYAAHH!!
HAH! NOT SO TOUGH WITHOUT YOUR LEG-MAN, HUH, FLOATER?
SKOOTER! PIZFIZ! CAN YOU MOVE?
SKOOTER CAN, BUT MY LEG'S BUSTED!
GET GOING! I'M BAGGED!
I MEAN IT! GO! I WON'T SLIDE 'EM ANYTHING!
KEEP THE CHILDREN IN THE KNOW OF OLD PIZFIZ! NOW MOVE!
THERE IS NO ESCAPE!
BLAKOW

THEY'RE HEADING DOWN AN ALLEYWAY IN SECTOR 18A. IT'S TOO NARROW FOR THE FLOATERS TO MANEUVER.

CAM FLOATER 6
SECTOR 18A
AREA 23-7D
INSURGENT ID
JANIS - SKOOTER

RUNNER ACCESS ONLY

THE FLOATERS'LL *TRACK* 'EM. WE'LL PURSUE ON *FOOT*.

DROP THE PLASMA ROD AND *SURRENDER!* IN THE NAME OF THE *MAESTRO!*

DON'T THEY EVER GET *TIRED* OF SAYING THAT?

SKOOTER... I THINK WE'RE *SCREWED*.

FLARK IT, WE'VE SECURED YOUR PAL, PIZFIZ.

WE ONLY NEED *ONE* OF YOU FOR QUESTIONING, REALLY.

REST OF YOU ARE EXPENDABLE.

WH-WHAT'S *SHAKING* THAT BUILDING?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?!

THE BUILDING

IT'S THE OUTLAWS! IT'S GOTTA BE!

WHO CARES?! RUN! RUN!

TELL THE OTHERS THAT THE OUTLAWS ARE GETTING AWAY! WE'LL PURSUE AT...

NO.

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU WILL.

IS THAT... WHO I THINK IT--

I... DON'T THINK IT IS... BUT--

GOOD DAY, GENTLEMEN.

YOU'LL BE *PLEASED* TO KNOW...

THE DOCTOR IS *IN.*

B-KOW

B-KOW

ALL RIGHT! I ADMIT I'M *NOT* A MEDICAL DOCTOR! BUT EVEN SO--

--I CAN SEE YOU GENTLEMEN NEED TO BE *HEAVILY* MEDICATED!

THIS IS OUR *CHANCE!* WHILE THE STUDLY'S RAZZING THE GRAV COPS, WE CAN GO BACK FOR PIZFIZ!

IT'S TOO *LATE*, SKOOTER. PIZFIZ IS ALREADY BAGGED. I SAW ONE OF THE FLOATERS *SCARF* WITH HIM.

AND NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE HOLDS OUT, HE'S GOING TO WIND UP SLIDING IT *ALL* TO THE MAESTRO. OUR SET-UP, OUR PLACE--*EVERY-THING.*

WHAT WE GOTTA DO IS WARN THE *OTHERS!* GET 'EM *RELOCATED.*

WHAT ABOUT THE *GREEN GUY?*

FROM WHAT GRAMPS SAYS, THE BEST THING WE CAN DO IS GIVE HIM *ROOM* AND LET HIM *WORK.*

I'VE CALLED FOR *BACK-UP!* WE'RE TO RENDEZVOUS WITH A DOG O' WAR IN SECTOR 18C.

WE DON'T NEED THOSE OVERSTUFFED CANINES!

THAT GREEN GUY CAUGHT US OFF-GUARD, IS ALL. NOTHING WE CAN'T--

HUNH!?

ALL RIGHT, BOYS. *LAND* THIS THING. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE *WORDS.*

PULL UP! *PULL UP,* YOU STUPID FLOATER!

I'M *TRYING!* I CAN'T GET THE ALTI--

YEEAAAAA

AAA

THAV.LAM

INCREDIBLE. THE PLATFORM OPERATOR WASN'T JUST INSIDE IT. HE WAS *MELDED* TO IT... *BONDED*, SOMEHOW. HE COULDN'T EJECT BECAUSE HE WAS *PART* OF IT.

THAT *HAD* TO HURT.

WHAT'S THAT *SOUND*? SOMETHING "GALUMPHING" THIS...

WAY?

GRAAWWW

WHAT THE HELL IS *THAT*?!

YOU ARE ABOUT TO BE *EATEN* BY A DOG O' WAR.

IF YOU WISH TO INCLUDE THE NAMES OF THE NEXT-OF-KIN IN YOUR DYING SCREAMS, PLEASE *DO* SO.

THEY WILL BE NOTIFIED WITHIN 48 HOURS.

GRAWWF

RESISTANCE IS *POINTLESS*. THE DOG O'WAR SERIES IS SPECIALLY BRED BY THE MAESTRO *HIMSELF*.

ITS JAWS CAN CRUSH ADAMANTIUM IN 7.3 SECONDS.

I HARDLY THINK YOUR *NECK* WILL AFFORD *MUCH* OF A CHALLENGE.

THINK AGAIN!

FLOATERS! PICK ME UP!!

YOU'RE NOT GOING *ANY-WHERE*, LEGMAN!

HEY, FLOATERS!

DOG IT!

HUNH. I WOULD'VE THOUGHT THEY COULD WITH-STAND IMPACT BETTER THAN *THAT*. PERHAPS THEY SELF-DESTRUCTED WHEN THEY WERE INCAPACITATED.

DOESN'T MATTER. I'VE GOT *YOU*. AND *YOU'RE* GOING TO BRING A MESSAGE TO THE "MAESTRO."

RAKOVLAM

TELL HIM I'M *COMING* FOR HIM. THAT THE *FEAR* IS *OVER*. THAT HE'S *OUT* OF TIME.

FOOMF

TELL HIM THE INCREDIBLE HULK *SAID* SO.

THE HULK.

GOD HELP US. THE HULK.

IT'S NOT POSSIBLE.

IT'S TEMPORALLY IMPLAUSIBLE.

IT'S ABSURD.

OH! MINISTER! I WAS JUST ABOUT TO GO BACK ON DUTY AND--

HUH! HE DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE US.

HE SCARES ME ALMOST AS MUCH AS THE MAESTRO.

MINISTER. THE MAESTRO LEFT A MESSAGE THAT HE WAS NOT TO BE DISTURBED BY AFFAIRS OF STATE TODAY.

LET ME PASS, OAF. IF THE MAESTRO DOESN'T HEAR THIS NEWS IMMEDIATELY, HE'LL SCREAM FOR THE HEAD OF THE ONE WHO KEPT IT FROM HIM.

HEE HA HA HEE

WONDERFUL!

GORGEOUS!

MARVELOUS!

WHAT DAY *IS* IT ANYWAY?

HAVE YOU TRIED THE--

EXQUISITE! THAT'S EXQUISITE!

TELL HIM I'M *HERE.*

HE'S BUSY.

I'M *BUSIER.*

HE WAS *VERY* SPECIFIC.

YES SIR.

MAESTRO. A PROBLEM HAS ARISEN THAT REQUIRES YOUR *IMMEDIATE* ATTENTION.

ESMERALDA, MY DEAR, STEP ASIDE OR YOUR NAME GOES DOWN HERE ON MY LIST AND I'LL HAVE YOU BONDED WITH THE FIRST AVAILABLE FOUR-LEGGED MAMMAL I CAN *OBTAIN*, REGARDLESS OF ITS HEALTH, GENDER OR *PEDIGREE.*

THIS HAD *BETTER* BE GOOD.

IT'S *HIM.* *SWEAR* IT IS.

BUT HE LOOKS *DIFFERENT.*

YOU SCAN ANYONE WHO LOOKS *CLOSE* TO HIM?

I TWIGGED THE HELMET! IT'S *MINE!*

FLARK *YOU!*

IT'S *SPOOKY,* WHAT IT IS.

THE WAY THEY'RE *LOOKING* AT ME... WITH BOTH *FEAR* AND *RESPECT.*

THE FEAR FROM STRANGERS I'M *USED* TO. BUT THE RESPECT... THAT'S *NEW.*

THERE'S A STENCH OF *UNREALITY* ABOUT THIS PLACE.

ALONG WITH THE *OTHER* STENCHES --LIKE PEOPLE WHO HAVEN'T BATHED IN *YEARS.*

I KIND OF *LIKE* IT.

HSST! *HULK!*

I WAS *WONDERING* WHERE YOU PEOPLE GOT OFF TO.

DON'T STAND THERE *JAWING!* INTO THE HIDEYHOLE!

QUICK!

DON'T WORRY. NO ONE WOULD *DARE* FOLLOW *ME.*

KLIK

THIS PLACE IS *REMARK-ABLE*. DID YOU BUILD IT ALL *YOUR-SELVES*?

SOME OF IT. SOME OF IT WAS *ALREADY* HERE, AND THOSE OF US IN THE KNOW RIGGED IT FOR US *SPECIAL*.

WHAT IS THIS, AN *ELEVATOR*?

LIFTER, YEAH. HOLD *STILL* A MO.

WHERE'S THE CONTROL?

RECEIVE JANIS AND COMPANION, UNDER *MY* AUTHORITY. PASSCODE ZED ALPHA GAMMA.

SCAN FOR ID.

ID CONFIRMED. PLEASE PROCEED.

WHUFF!

WHAT, YOU NEVER BEEN ON A *LIFTER* BEFORE?

OH, YES. I JUST USUALLY GET A MOMENT'S *WARNING* BEFORE.

THIS THING COULD USE SOME *MUZAK*.

SOME WHAT?

NEVER MIND.

HOW FAR *DOWN* ARE WE GOING?

ALL THE WAY.

BLAKOW

DID YOU HEAR AN *EXPLOSION?*

YEAH. SOMEBODY "DARED" FOLLOW YOU, SEEMS LIKE.

PROBABLY AN UNDERCOVER COP WITH A *TRACKER* ON HIS WRIST.

YOU MEAN HE'LL LEAD HIS PEOPLE *HERE?*

LIKEASNOT, LEFT TO *HIMSELF.*

BUT HE *WON'T.*

THREE... TWO... ONE...

KA-BOOM

SCAN MY WORDS... WE HAVE *LOTS* OF ENTRANCES...

...BUT IF YOU'RE *NOT* THE RIGHT STUFF...

...THERE'S *NO* EXIT.

JANIS! DROP! HE'S RIGHT *BEHIND* YOU!!

THIS IS *TRULY* REMARKABLE.

THERE'S A WHOLE *COMMUNITY* DOWN HERE.

THINK I'M *BLIND*, JOCKO? THINK I DIDN'T SCAN HIM THERE?

AND THEY ALL LOOK AT ME WITH THAT SAME TERROR FROM ABOVE.

OKAY, JANIS... *HOLD* IT.

I'VE GONE ALONG WITH ALL OF THIS *SO* FAR. EVEN SAVED YOUR HASH WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES...

...BUT THAT WAS JUST AS MUCH BECAUSE YOU WERE MY *GUIDE* HERE AS ANYTHING ELSE.

BUT NOW YOU'D BETTER START PROVING, TO *MY* SATISFACTION, THE THINGS YOU'VE BEEN *TELLING* ME.

OTHERWISE, I'LL BRING THIS PLACE *DOWN*.

I SWEAR TO YOU, HE'LL HELP US!

LEMME SLIDE YOU WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT HIM! HE'LL--

WE DON'T HAVE TO BE SLIDED NOTHIN', SKOOTER.

WE KNOW WHAT HE IS.

YOU KNOW NOTHIN', SLEDGE!

AND NOT YOU EITHER, ROCKER. NONE OF YOU KNOWS.

ONLY ONE WHO REALLY KNOWS IT ALL IS GRAMPS. HE SLID US THE ONLY HOPE WE GOT.

OR IS THIS HOW YOU WANT TO GO ON? EH?

HIDING, AFRAID, WAITING FOR SOMETHING BETTER TO COME ALONG, AND THEN WHEN IT DOES, YOU TURN INTO GNARLY BITS?

THIS IS THE STUDLY TO HELP US! GRAMPS SAID SO.

AND NOW I'LL SLIDE YOU WHY... SO YOU'LL ALL BE IN THE KNOW.

THE STUDLY'S *REAL* NAME IS ROBERT BRUCE BANNER. ONCE--*DECADES* AGO--HE WAS A SCRAWNY GIT SCIENTIST, TESTING OUT A WEAPON CALLED A *GAMMA BOMB.*

BUT JUST *BEFORE* IT WENT OFF, HE SCANNED A TEENAGED BOY ON THE TEST SITE, AND RAN OUT TO *SAVE* HIM.

GOT THE BOY TO SAFETY, BUT HIS OWN HIDE GOT SHOT THROUGH WITH GAMMA RADIATION.

BOOM

FIRE

YOU'RE ALL IN THE KNOW OF WHAT RADIATION CAN DO. BUT IT DID HIM *DIFFERENT.*

REAL DIFFERENT.

AND THAT'S WHEN HE GOT TAGGED WITH THE NAME: *THE HULK.*

HE CAME HERE WITH ME THROUGH THE FOG OF WHAT'S GONE BEFORE, TO *HELP* US. HE DID IT ON A LEAP OF FAITH.

AND NOW HE NEEDS A LEAP OF FAITH FROM *US* AS WELL.

THE *SLIDING.*

THESE IMAGES...

THE MIND'S EYE.

WHAT'S SCANNED IS WHAT'S *KNOWN.*

WHATEVER. IT'S NOTHING I'VE *SEEN* BEFORE. NOT NEWS FOOTAGE, OR ANYTHING.

WHERE DID YOU *GET* THEM FROM?

LOOK...I CAME HERE FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST, BECAUSE RICK JONES *VOUCHED* FOR YOU...AND LOOKED LIKE HE'D SEEN A *GHOST* WHEN HE DID.

BUT NOW... I *WANT* THAT PROOF.

IT'S RIGHT DOWN *THERE.*

IF YOU *FOLLOW* THE LIGHT...

...THEN YOU'LL *SEE* THE LIGHT.

AND SECOND, BECAUSE YOU TOLD ME SOME THINGS THAT WERE TOO *HIDEOUS* TO IGNORE, ESPECIALLY IF THIS "MAESTRO" *IS* WHO YOU CLAIM.

OH MY LORD.

DEAD AGAIN!

That him?

YES, GRAMPS. HE'S *HERE.*

HE TALKED AND ACTED JUST THE WAY YOU *SAID* HE WOULD, EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

THIS... THIS ROOM... IT'S COMPLETELY FILLED WITH--

Relics.

Like me.

Needs a giant penny.

Pretty complete otherwise.

WHO *ARE* YOU, OLD MAN?

This old man.

He played one.

Play one for you.

Soon as I wet my whistle.

THAT SONG... THE ONE *HE* WAS PLAYING WHEN I--

RICK?

Bitchin', huh, Bruce.

COLD TONIGHT.

I HEAR THE OUTLAWS GOT A BASE STASHED SOMEWHERE. BET *THEY'RE* NICE AND WARM.

MAYBE IT *PAYS* TO BE AN OUTLAW.

DON'T SAY THAT, EVEN IF YOU'RE KIDDING.

I HEAR THEY GOT AN OUTLAW UP AT THE *CASTLE*.

THEY'LL STRIP-SLIDE HIM, THAT'S FOR CERTAIN.

POOR BUGGER. I'D RATHER *FREEZE* TO DEATH OUT HERE THAN SCREAM TO DEATH IN *THERE*.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHO YOU'RE *MUCKIN'* WITH, MATES! I'LL RE-SIST *ANYTHING* YOU GOT TO THROW!

STUFF YOUR ACADEMICS!

I'M NOT GONNA SLIDE YOU *NOTHIN'*!

THE QUESTION OF YOUR RE-SISTANCE IS GOING TO BE SOMEWHAT *ACADEMIC*.

YOU'RE A *BRAVE* ONE, I'LL GIVE YOU *THAT*.

UNHHH...

I RESPECT *FEW* THINGS IN THIS WORLD, AND BRAVERY IS ONE OF THOSE THINGS.

STUPIDITY, HOWEVER, I *ABHOR*.

BRAVERY IS WHAT'S *NEEDED* HERE, PIZFIZ. THE BRAVERY TO TURN YOUR BACK ON YOUR COHORTS, THEY *CAN-NOT* HELP YOU NOW.

ONLY I CAN.

IF YOU ARE COOPER-ATIVE, AND *BRAVE*, I CAN *REWARD* THAT. I HAVE *VAST* RESOURCES.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

PTUI

FLARK YOU.

YOU BRAINLESS TURD! YOU *DARE* SPIT ON ME!

I'LL CRUSH YOUR HEAD LIKE AN *EGGSHELL!*

MAESTRO, *NO!* DON'T YOU *SEE?* THAT'S WHAT HE *WANTS!!*

YES.

YES, OF *COURSE*, MINISTER. TO DIE *BEFORE* WE LEARN WHAT WE NEED. RUDIMENTARY CUNNING, AND YET IT *NEARLY* WORKED. THANK YOU.

WHAT DO YOU WISH TO *VIEW*, MAESTRO?

THE MOST RECENT 48 HOURS OF THE YOUNG MAN'S LIFE SHOULD SUFFICE.

NO!

YOU'RE NOT GETTING *NOTHIN'!*

I...I CAN *FIGHT* YOU! I...I CAN...

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

JONES, R

NO ANSWER. MEBBE HE'S NOT *THERE*, JANIS?

WE DIDN'T COME ALL THIS WAY FOR NO "NOT THERE."

C'MON! OPEN *UP* THERE!

JONES, R

WAP WAP WAP

FREAKERS. IT'S *HIM*, ALL RIGHT.

OH JEEZ, THE *CIRCUS* IS IN TOWN.

JONES, R

LOOK, GUYS, THIS IS A *BAD* DAY, OKAY? I HAD A FIGHT WITH MY GIRL. SOME ALIENS TRIED TO KILL ME. THE AVENGERS THINK I'M A TRAITOR. AND YOU JUST YANKED ME OUT OF THE SHOWER. SO WHAT*EVER* YOU'RE SELLING, PEDDLE IT *ELSEWHERE*, OKAY?

WHOA!

OKAY. THAT CHAIN LOCK YOU FRIED WAS TWO BUCKS. FORK IT OVER.

"BUCKS?"

LOOK, YOU HAVE TO LISTEN. WE HAVE A *MESSAGE*--

THE ONLY MESSAGE BEING DELIVERED RIGHT NOW IS THAT YOU GOT *FIVE SECONDS* TO GET *OUT* OF MY APARTMENT!

ONE, TWO--

FIVE!

OOOOFFFF!!

OOOF!!

I *WARNED* YOU! I LEARNED MY MOVES FROM THE *BEST!*

HEY!

SO DID I.

ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS *TALK!*

URKHH!!

I'M *NOT* IN THE MOOD.

DON'T MOVE! OR I'LL... I'LL...

YOU'LL *WHAT?*

GRIP IT, PIZ, HE'S OUR *HOPE*, REMEMBER? *NOT* OUR ENEMY.

LISTEN,..I'M GOING TO PULL SOMETHING FROM AROUND MY NECK, *VERY* SLOWLY. SCAN IT.

SCAN IT WITH *WHAT?*

WITH YOUR *EYES!* DON'T'CHA TWEAK *ENGLISH?*

WHERE DID YOU *GET* THAT? THAT'S MY AVENGERS PRIORITY PASS!

BUT MINE'S IN MY WALLET! WHAT'S THIS ONE, A *FAKE*?

IF IT *IS* A FAKE...

...THEN I GUESS THE WRITING ON THE BACK IS, TOO, HUH? SEEM FAMILIAR?

READ IT.

"SHAKE HANDS WITH--"

OH MAN. OH, THIS IS TOO--

THIS IS *BORING!*

I *KNOW* WHAT THEY DID! I NEED TO KNOW *HOW* THEY DID IT!

FIND OUT!

MAESTRO, IF WE JUMP AROUND INSIDE THE SUBJECT'S MEMORY TOO MUCH, WE MIGHT--

I DON'T *CARE!* JUST *DO* IT!

UNHHHH...

PIZFIZ! STOP STARING AT YOUR UGLY MUG IN THAT THING AND PUT IT *DOWN!*

IT'S *NOT* A FLARKING TOY!

SORRY, DAKORD! I JUST NEVER SCANNED ANY-THING LIKE IT BEFORE!

GRAMPS! YOU'RE *AWAKE!* YOU HEAR THE REPORTS?

Yeah, Didn't *believe* 'em, though.

But that's *it*. That's *it*, awright.

You got it up and running?

BOLO THINKS HE'S TWIGGED IT PRETTY GOOD. WE'RE GONNA *TEST* IT.

LAST CHANCE TO BACK OUT, SKOOTER.

YOU KIDDING? WOULDN'T, UH... MISS IT FOR ANYTHING.

OKAY. *HANG ON.* HERE WE GO.

FLARK!

WHAT'S *HAPPENING?* I CAN'T SEE MY LEGS? ARE MY LEGS O--

I DON'T *BELIEVE* IT!

IS... IS THAT THE WAY IT'S *SUPPOSED* TO WORK?

Yup. I've seen Doc Doom's time machine operate before. That was textbook. Where'd you send Skooter?

THIRTY-FIVE SECONDS INTO THE FUTURE. WHICH MEANS ANY *MINUTE* NOW...

--KAY?

WHAT HAPPENED? IT DIDN'T *WORK.*

IT SURE *DID!* YOU FEEL OKAY?

I FEEL *FINE.* WHY *SHOULDN'T* I? I DIDN'T GO NOWHERES.

OKAY. IT'S WORKING. SO...*NOW* WHAT?

WE ESCAPE TO ANOTHER TIME, THAT'S WHAT. *AWAY* FROM THIS HELLISH WORLD.

GREAT. RUN AWAY FROM THE MAESTRO, AND ABANDON *EVERY-ONE* TO HIS RULE.

WELL THEN--?

I'll tell you.

What we do is...

...is...

...iizzzzz...

.....

SOMEONE CHECK GRAMPS. HE *VEGGED* AGAIN.

EACH TIME GETS WORSE AND *WORSE.*

You'll need this for where you're going.

GRAMPS? YOU OKAY?

Why *wouldn't* I be? Kids...we have to fight Fire with Fire. Fire with Fire.

And you gotta go back and get the big green fire-man. First, though, you gotta find *me*, to help *convince* him.

FIND YOU? YOU'RE RIGHT *HERE*, GRAMPS.

Not me *now*. Me *then*. I'm writing, "Shake hands with your great granddaughter, stud."

I'll tell you where to find me. Give *this* to me. If I need *more* convincing, remind me of the time with Marlo and the bowl of cherry--

WHAT HAPPENED? WHY DID WE *LOSE* THE MEMORY?

WE'VE LOST MORE THAN *THAT*, MAESTRO.

I WAS *AFRAID* OF THIS. THE MIND/SLIDE PROCESS CAN BE QUITE *DEVASTATING* IF THE SUBJECT IS UNCOOPERATIVE.

YOU'RE SAYING THAT THE SUBJECT'S MIND IS WIPED, AND THAT HE'S OF NO FURTHER *USE* TO US.

THAT'S CORRECT.

THIS IS FOR SPITTING ON ME, YOU LITTLE CRETIN!

SPLUCH

MINISTER, ROUND UP A STRIKE FORCE. I'LL BE LEADING THEM PERSONALLY.

AND HAVE THAT *MESS* CLEARED AWAY.

YES, MAESTRO.

RICK...

...HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

WHEN YOU...YOU IN THE *PAST*... CONTACTED ME, THEN I CAME. BECAUSE I *TRUSTED* YOU, RICK.

BUT NOW YOU'VE GOT TO TELL ME. YOU'VE GOT TO FILL ME IN. WHAT HAPPENED?

Hey, Bruce. How ya doin'?

I'M *FINE*. RICK. WHERE... *WHEN*... AM I? HOW MANY YEARS IN THE FUTURE?

Ninety years or so. Since then, there was...*whattya* call it? Lots of explosions, dying, fighting...

A *WAR*?

That's it. A war. *Big* one.

WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE? DOCTOR DOOM? THE LEADER? THE RED SKULL?

Nope.

Funny, ain't it? All the good guys protecting humanity from the bad guys. And humanity went and blew itself up real fine without help from *anyone* in armor or funny longjohns. Go figure.

Remember all the *reports* about how people might survive atomic wars?

Exaggerated. All of it.

Thor? Gone.

Wolverine? Gone.

Cap... *All* of 'em... all gone.

And after the third world war, there was *another* war... can't even *remember* what *it* was about.

WHAT'S *LEFT* OF THE WORLD, RICK? *YOU'RE* HERE. BETTY? IS SHE--?

She's right *there*.

Right in between the Leader and Jean Grey. Just behind the Wasp.

As for what's left... Dystopia's pretty much *it* for the next few hundred miles.

Rest is *Wasteland*, or random mutant encampments. People *dying* by degrees.

BETTY BANNER

JEAN GREY

(AGAIN?!)

The LEADER

WASP

Dystopia has anti-mag radiation shielding from underground generators, so that the residents are safe. Not that the Maestro *cares*.

THAT NAME AGAIN... THE MAESTRO.

WHO *IS* HE? *WHO IS HE?!*

YOU DON'T HAVE TO SHOUT.

RADS DIDN'T BOTHER HIM. WHEN IT ALL WENT DOWN, THE RADIATION PUMPED HIM *UP*. GRAMPS SAYS THE MAESTRO COULD SURVIVE *ANY-THING* SHORT OF A GROUND ZERO *NUKE-EM*.

WHEN THE WORLD WENT TO HELL, THE MAESTRO WAS STANDING AT THE GATE WITH THE KEY.

He was *smart* enough, and *strong* enough, to create this city from the ruins. Below ground, in miles and miles of survival tunnels, lived people like myself and the others. No one down here knew that, *above* ground, the Maestro was building Dystopia. Now it's *too late*.

He *takes* what he wants. *Does* what he wants. Lives for his own amusement and gratification. If he *favors* you, *great*. If not... *Forget* it.

He's *insane*, Bruce.

RICK...

...WHO *IS* HE?

You have to ask?

IT'S *HIM!*

IT'S THE *MAESTRO!*

ALL HAIL THE MAESTRO.

MAESTRO, MY DAUGHTER... SHE *LONGS* TO BE ONE OF YOUR CHUMLIES! TO BE *CARED* FOR AND--

I HAVE NO *TIME* FOR THIS.

ARE YOU *DEAF*? I SAID *OUT* OF MY *WAY!*

WELL?

THIS IS *IT*, MAESTRO.

WE HAD *SUSPECTED* THE OUTLAWS WERE WITHIN THIS VICINITY. THE LAST MEMORIES OF PIZFIZ *CONFIRMED* THIS.

MAESTRO, ALL THAT I HAVE IS Y--

WE'VE BEEN *STYMIED*, HOWEVER, AS WE'VE BEEN UNABLE TO LOCATE AN *ENTRANCEWAY*. THE DEPTHS, OF COURSE, MAKE IT INACCESSIB--

IS *THAT* YOUR ONLY PROBLEM?

IDIOTS! *STAND ASIDE!*

YOU SHOULD HAVE CONSULTED ME ON THIS *MONTHS* AGO!

YOU'VE BEEN...

... BUSY.

IT'S THE MAESTRO. *GOTTA* BE.

HE SLIDED THE INFO FROM PIZFIZ.

WHAT THE FLARK *IS* THAT?

WE'VE PULLED EVERY-ONE OUT OF THE SECTOR AND RE-HIDED THEM. WHEN THE MAESTRO GETS HERE, HE'LL HAVE A RIGHT *PROPER* SURPRISE.

D ALERT RED ALERT RED ALERT RED ALERT RED ALERT REDALI

GOOD. HAVE THE LAST OF THE GRUNTS CLEAR THE AREA.

JANIS... YOU THINK *PIZ* IS ALL RIGHT?

NO.

NOW *MOVE* YOUR ASS. IT'LL STILL TAKE HIM A WHILE TO GET HERE ...BUT NOT *TOO* LONG, THE WAY *HE'S* GOING.

RED ALERT RED ALERT RED A

I'M *THROUGH!*

RED ALERT RED ALERT RED A

HURRY UP, YOU IDIOTS! I'M SURE THE OUTLAWS AREN'T EXACTLY UN-AWARE OF MY COMING.

MOVE IT! THE MAESTRO WANTS US DOWN THERE FASTER!

YEAH, WELL, FLARK HIM.

I NOTICE YOU SAY THAT REAL QUIET-LIKE.

SPREAD OUT, ALL OF YOU! FIND ME THOSE REBELS.

BUT LEAVE THE LARGE GREEN ONE FOR ME.

OH, AND BRING ME THE BROOMSTICK OF THE WITCH OF THE WEST.

WHAT'S A BROOMSTICK?

I GOT A BETTER QUESTION, WHAT ARE THOSE THINGS UP THERE?

SSSSSSSSS

AARHHHHHH

SIR! WE'RE GETTING REPORTS--!

SCREAMING! SOMETHING ABOUT ACID!

WHAT, DID YOU THINK THE REBELS MIGHT NOT FIGHT BACK?

WATCH YOUR FLARGING *STEPS!* AND EVERYONE, MAKE SURE YOUR *FACEPLATES* ARE LOWERED, IN CASE THEY TRY--

GAS!

EVERYONE OKAY? EVERYONE *BREATHING?* OXYGEN ON-LINE?

...IT'S EATING RIGHT *THROUGH* THE--

SIR... THE GAS... IT'S...

ALL THAT SHOUTING-- IS THE *REBELS*, OR *OUR* PEOPLE? SOMEBODY REPORT!

I'VE GOT *RADIO SILENCE*, SIR! LOST CONTACT WITH--

YEEAGGGG!!

LASERS!

FALL BACK! EVERYBODY FALL--

EEYYI!!!

ARRHHHH!!!

BIOLINKS
8, 19, 21, 24
BROKEN
NEGATIVE INPUT
ALL-COMS
CASUALTY RATE
100%
ADVISE □

BOOBY TRAPS.

REPEAT
ADVISE
□

AND *WE* WERE THE BOOBIES WHO WERE TRAPPED.

I THOUGHT THE REBELS WOULD BE MAN ENOUGH TO FIGHT US FACE-TO-FACE. LOOKS LIKE I GAVE THEM TOO MUCH *CREDIT.*

STAY HERE.

IF YOU *INSIST,* SIR.

HUNH.

POOR DEVILS.

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THE REBELS WOULDN'T BE THAT STUPID. THEIR LOCATING DOOM'S TIME MACHINE...

...THAT *ALONE* SHOULD HAVE PUT ME MORE ON MY GUARD.

BLAST.

ALL THIS ACID IS *RUINING* MY BEST CLOTHES.

ALL RIGHT. WHEREVER YOU ARE... YOU MIGHT AS WELLCOME OUT!

I DON'T HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE *WORLD* YOU KNOW!

BLAST YOU! SHOW YOURSELVES!

WELL.

WELL.

DOCTOR BANNER, I PRESUME.

Welcome to Dystopia.

It is a future where radiation traces... legacies from two major wars in the 21st century... infect everything from the food to the air. Where a gray pall hangs over the skies like a shroud.

A future where the masses scramble to obtain food, clothes, shelter, sex... all the necessities of life. Where insurgents, outlaws, roam miles of underground fallout shelters, fighting for survival. Where a handful of wealthy, favored individuals live the good life.

A future where all the heroes exist only in the memories provided by dust-covered relics... relics maintained by one amazingly old man.

A future that is ruled with an iron fist by the menacing, superpowered individual known to his frightened subjects as the Maestro.

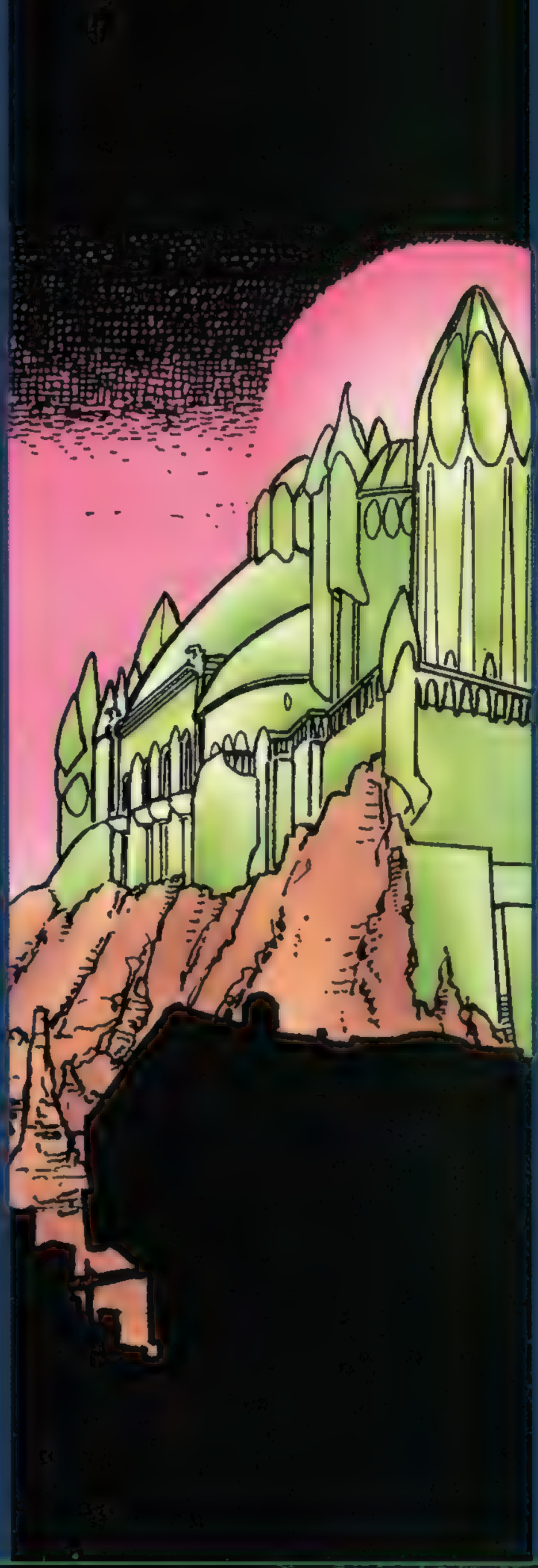
Into this future strides Dr. Robert Bruce Banner, the Incredible Hulk. Brought there through the combination of the amazingly old man's resourcefulness, and the serendipitous discovery of Doctor Doom's time machine, the Hulk witnesses the evil of the Maestro.

He resolves that the Maestro--who keeps the populace in line with his Gravity Police, his Dogs of War, and the sheer strength at his command--must not be allowed to continue his brutal ways. The Hulk must do battle, both physically and mentally, with the individual who is his greatest foe.

It is a battle that only he can fight. That he must fight. For he knows that he himself is responsible for the presence of the Maestro... the despotic creature that is, in every way, shape and form, the Hulk's greatest, and ultimate, nightmare.

Dystopia, the future, and the Hulk will never be quite the same.

And neither will you.



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MARVEL COMICS

part 2 of 2

THE INCREDIBLE HULK®

future imperfect

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

future imperfect

part 2 of 2

PETER DAVID	GEORGE PEREZ	TOM SMITH	JOE ROSEN
writer	artist	colorist	letterer
BOBBIE CHASE	MATTHEW MORRA	TOM DeFALCO	DAWN GEIGER
editor	assistant editor	editor in chief	designer

A HUNDRED YEARS OR SO INTO THE FUTURE, THE MAIN HUB OF ACTIVITY IS DYSTOPIA--A CITY BUILT UPON THE RUINS OF EARLIER, NUKED-OUT GENERATIONS.

DYSTOPIA IS RULED BY THE GREEN IRON FIST OF THE BEING CALLED "THE MAESTRO..."

...THE MAESTRO IS, IN FACT, ROBERT BRUCE BANNER, APPARENTLY DRIVEN **MAD** BY AMBIENT RADIATION AND A CENTURY OF WATCHING EVERYTHING HE EVER KNEW --EVERYONE HE EVER LOVED--FALL TO DUST.

A GROUP OF DESPERATE FREEDOM FIGHTERS, STUMBLING UPON DOCTOR DOOM'S TIME MACHINE, HAVE MADE A DESPERATE BID FOR LIBERATION FROM THE MAESTRO'S REIGN.

THEIR LEADER, **JANIS**, HAS RETRIEVED FROM THE PAST THE ONE INDIVIDUAL WHO CAN MATCH THE MAESTRO MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY ...NAMELY, THE **INCREDIBLE HULK**.

THE FORCES OF THE MAESTRO HAVE PLAYED RIGHT INTO THE REBELS' HANDS. A RAID ON THE REBELS' UNDERGROUND STRONGHOLD RESULTED IN THE SLAUGHTER OF THE MAESTRO'S GUARDSMEN...LEAVING THE MAESTRO ALONE, TO FACE THE *WRATH* OF HIS YOUNGER SELF.

AT THIS POINT, THE PLAN--DEVELOPED BY JANIS, GREAT GRANDDAUGHTER OF THE DECREPIT RICK JONES--CALLED FOR THE HULK TO OVERPOWER THE MAESTRO AND END HIS REIGN OF TERROR.

SOMETHING'S COMING! FAST!

JUST ONE PROBLEM...

RUUUUNN!!

THE MAESTRO *ISN'T* COOPERATING.

FUTURE IMPERFECT

--conclusion

WHOOF! THAT'S *GOTTA* SMART.

IT'S THE *MAESTRO!* SOME-ONE'S TOSSIN' HIM LIKE A STONE!

IF *THAT'S* THE MAESTRO...

...THEN WHO THE FLARK IS *THAT?!*

WHAT DO *YOU* THINK, HULK?

NOT BAD, EH...

...FOR AN OLD MAN.

OOOOOFF!

OH, COME *ON*, HULK! YOU'RE THE FIRST CHALLENGE I'VE HAD IN *DECADES!*

DON'T MAKE IT SO *EASY* FOR ME...

...PUNY BANNER.

UNNHHHH!!!

NOT *BAD.*

NOT BAD FOR ME, CONSIDERING THAT I WAS STILL A SNOT-NOSED PUNK...

...WHO KNEW NOTHING ABOUT *NOTHING*...

...*LEAST* OF ALL HIS OWN POTENTIAL.

COME *HERE*, GIRL. YOUR MAESTRO NEEDS YOU.

SURRENDER, HULK...

...OR I TURN THIS GIRL INTO A BLOODY PULP RIGHT BEFORE YOUR VERY *EYES.*

HELP ME! PLEASE! HEELLLP MEEE!

ONLY THE GOOD *DOCTOR* THERE CAN HELP YOU, MY DEAR.

WHAT *SAY* YOU, HULK?

YOU'RE *AFRAID* OF ME.

SO AFRAID THAT YOU'RE RESORTING TO THREATENING HELPLESS FEMALES RATHER THAN TAKING ME ON.

GO *AHEAD*, RIP HER IN HALF.

SHE'S BETTER OFF DEAD THAN LIVING IN THIS PIT THAT *YOU'VE* CREATED. AND YOU'LL SIMPLY HAVE SHOWN EVERY-ONE HOW GUTLESS YOU *REALLY* ARE.

YOU'RE *BLUFFING.*

HOPING TO USE REVERSE PSYCHOLOGY TO TRICK ME.

PLEASE! PLEASE, HE'LL *KILL* ME! PLEASE, I'M *BEGGING* YOU--!!

PATHETIC, BANNER. *TRULY* PATHETIC.

I EXPECTED **BETTER** *OF YOU!*

BUT I DON'T BLUFF *THAT* EASILY!

NOOO!!

HA!

SO PRE-DICTABLE!

HE TOSSED THE GIRL ASIDE AND HE'S COMING AFTER OUR MAN AGAIN.

HOW'S THE FIGHT SCAN?

COULD GO *EITHER* WAY. MAESTRO LOOKS IN *CONTROL*, THO'.

FINISH TWIGGIN' THE WEAPONS FROM THE DEAD GUARDSMEN. WE DON'T GET TOO MANY *CHANCES* LIKE THIS.

ALL *DONE*, JANIS. LET'S BLITZ TO THE NEW LOCATION. EVERYBODY ELSE IS ALREADY *STASHED* THERE.

JANIS... YOU THINK THE BIG GREEN STUDLY CAN *TAKE* THE MAESTRO?

SKOOTER, I THINK WHAT I THINK DOESN'T *MATTER*.

I THINK WHAT WE GOTTA DO IS JUST *HOPE*.

AND COUNT ON THE *PLANS* TO SEE US THROUGH.

UNNHHH...

SOMEHOW, WHEN I SIGNED ON AS THE MAESTRO'S *MINISTER*...

...I NEVER ENVISIONED THE JOB BECOMING THIS... *EXHAUSTING.*

THE BATTLE SEEMS TO BE CONTINUING IN THE WEST QUARTER...WHICH MIGHT BE *ENOUGH* INCENTIVE TO TAKE UP RESIDENCE IN THE *EAST* QUARTER.

I DON'T *LIKE* THIS. NO ONE IN MEMORY HAS EVER PRESENTED A *SERIOUS* CHALLENGE TO THE MAESTRO.

THE LONGER THE BATTLE GOES, THE MORE I'D TEND TO THINK IT WOULD *FAVOR* THE *CHALLENGER.*

URKH!

HMM! THAT WAS A LITTLE TOO *CLOSE* FOR COMFORT.

NOW *MIGHT* BE A GOOD TIME TO HEAD BACK TO THE PALACE...

...UNTIL MATTERS ...SETTLE *DOWN* A BIT.

YOUR PRESENCE HERE IS AN INDICATION OF MY FOES' SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS, HULK.

IF THEY'D SUMMONED *THOR* FROM THE MISTS OF TIME, HE *MIGHT* HAVE MATCHED ME IN STRENGTH. OR PERHAPS THE FANTASTIC FOUR, WITH *RICHARDS'* BRILLIANCE AT THE HELM, *COULD* HAVE STYMIED ME.

OR MAYBE THE WILD MAN, THROUGH HIS SHEER HEROIC...

...OH, THAT'S *RIGHT.* YOU PROBABLY HAVEN'T *ENCOUNTERED* THE WILD MAN YET. WELL, NO MATTER.

THE POINT IS... THERE'S NOTHING THAT *YOU* CAN DO...

...THAT I HAVEN'T *ALREADY* DONE.

BACK THEN, YOU WERE *INCREDIBLE.* NOW...YOU'RE JUST *REDUNDANT.*

HOW DID YOU GET TO BE IN *CHARGE*, "MAESTRO?"

BY *TALKING* YOUR OPPONENTS TO DEATH?

NO, BY *BEATING* THEM TO DEATH.

AND IT ALL WENT SO *QUICKLY*, THAT I'M SORRY I DIDN'T *PROLONG* IT.

I'M MAKING UP FOR THAT NOW, THOUGH.

ARRHHH!!

DON'T YOU *UNDERSTAND*, HULK? I KNOW *EVERY* MOVE YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE.

I'VE GOT A HUNDRED YEARS' MORE *PRACTICE* AT BEING US THAN *YOU* DO.

GO AHEAD. *TAKE* YOUR BEST SHOT.

AT FIRST I THOUGHT YOU WERE JUST IN-SUFFER-ABLE. NOW...

...NOW I THINK YOU'LL JUST *SUFFER*.

NICE PLAY ON WORDS.

TOO BAD YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO BACK THEM *UP*.

GAME'S OVER, BRUCE.

I SAW THAT ONE COMING A CENTURY AWAY.

UNNHHH!!

YOU TIME-HOPPING, GREEN-SKINNED *BUFFOON.*

DID YOU THINK THAT YOU'D JUST SWEEP IN HERE AND TRIUMPH WAVING YOUR RIGHTEOUS-NESS LIKE A *FLAG?*

YOU'RE NOT IN YOUR RIGHT TIME *OR* PLACE, BANNER.

GET 'IM, GREEN GUY! DOWN WITH THE MAESTRO!

ZAKK, SHUT UP! HE'LL *HEAR* YOU!

I DON'T *CARE!* KILL THE MAESTRO!

BUT I'M GOING TO PUT YOU IN *YOUR* PLACE, BANNER. I'M GOING TO--

SING *SOPRANO,* MOTOR-MOUTH.

EEY!!!!!!!!!!

KRUNCH

MAYBE YOU'VE *FORGOTTEN* IN ALL THIS TIME, MAESTRO... BUT, AMONG *OTHER* THINGS, I'M AN *INVENTOR.*

WHICH MEANS I CAN BE INVENTIVE WHEN I *WANT* TO.

OH NO...THE *BUILDING...*

397

SKIN GRAFTS WHILE 'U' WAIT

QUICK, LET'S GET OUT OF H--

AW, *FLARK!*

ZAKK! I *LOVE* YA, MAN--!

HOLD ON!!

HOLD ON! I'M COMING!

HURRY, EVERYBODY! THERE'RE *PEOPLE* UNDERNEATH HERE!

I GOT'CHA! YOU'RE GONNA BE *FINE!*

YOU! TAKE IT *EASY!* I'LL GET YOU OUT OF...

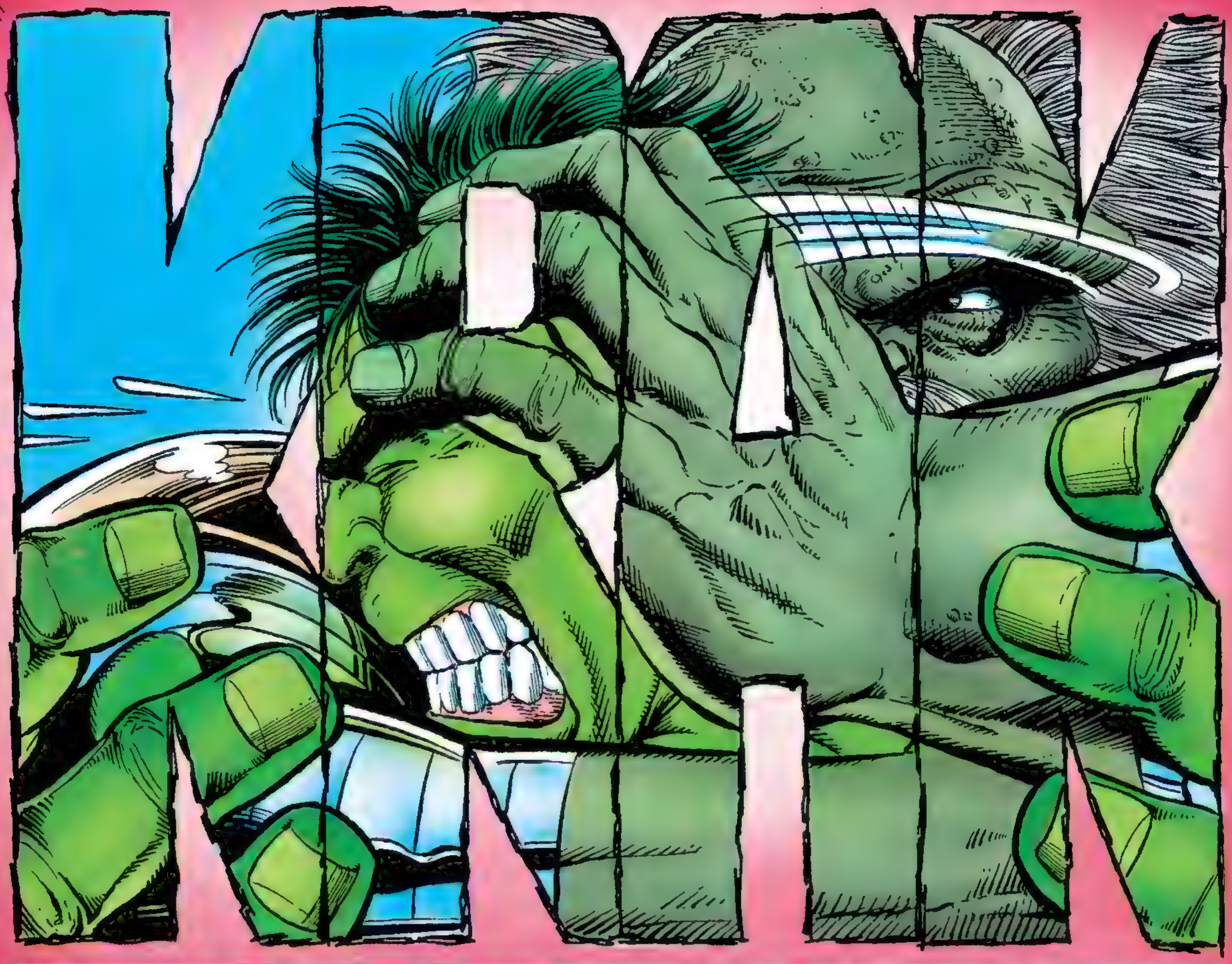
Maes...

...tro... *kill...*

OH HELL.

HELL. *INDEED,* BANNER! AND I'LL SEND YOU THERE--

--*PERSONALLY!!!*



BET YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO *DIE* NOW, EH, HULK?

AND YOU FIGURE THAT IF YOU *DIE*... THEN *I* WON'T EXIST, SO YOU'LL HAVE THE LAST LAUGH.

WRONG HULK.

WRONG ON *BOTH* COUNTS.

how bad?

BAD. MAESTRO HURT HIM *REAL* BAD, GRAMPS.

AND THEN THE MAESTRO'S SOLDIERS SHOWED UP AND SCARFED HIM AWAY TO THE CASTLE. WE *SCANNED* THE WHOLE THING.

GRAMPS, I *KNOW* ABOUT THE PLANS, BUT... BUT HE'S HURT SO BAD...

yeah, so much for plan a. still... I've seen him come back from the dead, so he'll come back from *this*. he won't let us down.

HOW CAN HE *SAY* THAT, WHEN THE HULK'S THE ONE WHO BECAME THE MAESTRO IN THE *FIRST* PLACE? DOES GRAMPS RICK STILL *TWEAK* THAT?

NO ONE *DID* ASK! AS FOR *YOU*... IF GRAMPS SAYS THE HULK COMES THROUGH FOR US, THAT'S GOOD *ENOUGH!* WHAT HE SAYS IS STILL WHAT'S *GOIN'* HERE. *SCAN* IT.?

YEAH. *SURE*, JANIS.

HE'S *LOSIN'* IT, Y'ASK ME.

you were named after Janis Joplin, y'know that?

YES, GRAMPS, I *KNOW* THAT. BUT WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT THE *HULK*?

who?

BETTY?

HE...HE *DID* KILL ME... AND NOW WE'RE TOGETHER... YOU AND ME...*BETTY*...

IF *THAT'S* WHAT YOU WISH TO CALL ME. I AM NOW *BETTY*.

HUH?

NO... NO, OF *COURSE* YOU'RE NOT.

BETTY... *ISN'T*. NOT *ANYMORE*.

SHE'S AN URN FILLED WITH ASHES IN RICK'S *MEMORABILIA* ROOM.

YOUR WORDS ARE SO *STRANGE*.

REST ASSURED, KID, MY WORDS ARE THE *LEAST* STRANGE THING ABOUT ME, AND *YOU* ARE--?

BETTY.

NO, *REALLY*. YOUR *NAME*.

BETTY.

FORGET YOUR NAME. WHO...*ARE* YOU? WHAT'S YOUR *FUNCTION* HERE?

I AM ONE OF THE MAESTRO'S *FAVORITES*.

YES, YES, I JUST *BET* YOU ARE.

I CAN'T *MOVE.*

THE MAESTRO BROKE SOMETHING IN YOU, YOUR NECK, OR BACK. SOMETHING. HE SAYS YOU'LL RECOVER, BUT THAT IT WILL TAKE TIME.

MEANTIME, I'M TO *HELP* YOU HOWEVER I CAN.

GOOD. GET ME A FLATBED TRUCK AND A TOW CHAIN TO HAUL ME *OUT* OF HERE.

A WHAT?

YOU SEEM VERY *TENSE.*

BUT I KNOW *JUST* HOW TO RELAX YOU.

I AM YOUR BETTY. ARE YOU *RELAXING* YET?

THE EXACT *OPPOSITE.*

PLEASE... DON'T *DO* THIS...

LET *BETTY* HANDLE EVERYTHING.

...STOP...

STOP!!

STTOPPPPPP

OUR GUEST SEEMS TO BE IN GREAT *PAIN.*

HE *IS,* MINISTER.

BUT *NOT* THE KIND YOU'D THINK.

LADIES... OUR GUEST NEEDS *MORE* RELAXATION. GO AND BE OF ASSISTANCE.

RIGHT *AWAY,* MAESTRO.

YES, MAESTRO.

I *AM.*

I'M KILLING HIM WITH *KINDNESS.*

HE IS, HOWEVER, *POWERLESS.*

EXPERIENCING SENSATIONS THAT HE DOES NOT *WISH* TO... FEELING GUILTY OVER *ENJOYING* THEM ...AND HELPLESS TO *TERMINATE* THE SITUATION.

I DO NOT *UNDERSTAND,* SIR. WHY DON'T YOU SIMPLY *KILL* HIM?

OVER HERE! THIS WAY! I THINK HE LANDED OVER *HERE*...

YEAH! *GOT* HIM!

I THINK HE'S STILL GOT SOME ***GOOD STUFF*** ON 'IM! BLOODY MINISTER DIDN'T STRIP *THIS* ONE BARE!

MUST HAVE ***OTHER*** STUFF ON HIS GRAY CELLS. C'MON. LESSEE WHAT WE CAN TWIG FROM--

FLARK OFF!!

HEY, NOW! FAIR'S ***FAIR!*** *WE* SCANNED 'IM FIRST!

NOTHIN'S FAIR, VULTURE, 'CEPT WHAT I SAY IS FAIR, AND WHAT I SAY, GOES!

AND I SAY THAT YOU GO! NOW!

THAT HIM, SKOOTER?

YEAH. SCANNED IT PROPER, AWRIGHT.

IT'S PIZFIZ.

OR AT LEAST... WHAT THAT BUTCHER, THE MAESTRO, LEFT OF PIZFIZ.

YOU WUZ THE BEST, PIZ. YOU...

...YOU...

YOU BLOODY ANIMAL! YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS!

QUIET! SOMEONE'LL HEAR!

EVEN IF THEY DO HEAR... THEY WON'T CARE.

WE'RE NOTHING TO THEM. WE'RE JUST ...JUST...

MEAT.

NO, NO...

...DON'T GET UP.

OH, NOW *WHY* SUCH A SOUR FACE? DON'T APPRECIATE MY HUMOR? OR DO YOU JUST GET ON YOUR *NERVES* SOMETIMES?

YOU SHOULD REALLY *THANK* ME, YOU KNOW. I'VE ARRANGED FOR THIS CHAIR FOR YOU TO GET AROUND IN, UNTIL YOU *HEAL.*

AND, OF COURSE, I ARRANGED FOR YOUR "THERAPY" EARLIER.

LET ME *GUESS.* SHE NOW CALLS HERSELF "BETTY."

IF I COULD KILL MYSELF RIGHT *NOW,* THIS *MOMENT*...

...I'D DO IT IN A *HEART-BEAT.*

BECAUSE THAT WOULD PUT AN *END* TO YOU.

STILL CLINGING TO *THAT,* ARE YOU?

MINISTER... IF YOU WOULDN'T MIND...?

NOT AT *ALL,* MAESTRO.

HERE. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS PULL THE TRIGGER. YOU HAVE ENOUGH MUSCULAR CONTROL BACK FOR *THAT*, I THINK.

TRUST ME... BLOWING YOUR BRAINS OUT IS SOMETHING THAT EVEN *OUR* FORMIDABLE HEALING ABILITIES WON'T OVERCOME.

NOW *YOU'RE* THE ONE WHO'S BLUFF-ING.

YOU WOULDN'T PUT *YOURSELF* AT RISK.

BUT I'M *NOT* AT RISK. *MY* EXISTENCE IS *ASSURED*. YOU SEE... I HAVE NO PRIOR *RE-COLLECTION* OF ANY OF THESE EVENTS.

WHEN YOUR OUTLAW PALS WENT BACK IN TIME AND BROUGHT YOU *FORWARD*, IT CREATED AN *ALTER-NATE* TIMELINE. TIME *SPLIT OFF* FROM THAT MOMENT.

ONE TIME BRANCH IS NOW THE EVENTS THAT LED TO *ME*. ALONG *ANOTHER* BRANCH ARE THE EVENTS THAT WILL NOW HAPPEN TO *YOU*... YOUR OWN "REAL FUTURE," AS IT WERE. IN OTHER WORDS: THANKS TO YOUR FRIENDS, I'M NOW ONE *POSSIBLE* FUTURE FOR DR. BRUCE BANNER, *UNHAMPERED* BY *YOU*. WHAT HAPPENS TO *YOU*, HULK, IS YOUR *OWN* AFFAIR.

YOU *COULD* BE *LYING*. PERHAPS ALL OF THIS ALREADY *DID* HAPPEN TO YOU. PERHAPS ALL THE THINGS YOU'RE SAYING NOW... ARE THINGS THAT YOU REMEMBER HAVING *ALREADY* HEARD, WHEN *YOU* WERE IN *MY* POSITION. AND YOU'RE HOPING THAT WHAT WORKED *ONCE* WILL WORK *AGAIN*.

OR PERHAPS YOU SENT ME BACK TO MY OWN TIME, BUT WITH MY *MEMORY* ERASED. PERHAPS YOU'RE *NOT* AS SAFE AS YOU *THINK* YOU ARE.

I'M GETTING A HEADACHE TRYING TO FOLLOW THIS.

THAT *IS* A HAZARD WITH TIME TRAVEL THEORIZING, MINISTER.

I BELIEVE FIRMLY IN *MY* HYPOTHESIS, HULK, BUT IF YOU'RE WILLING TO RISK THROWING AWAY *YOUR* LIFE ON *YOURS*... THEN *I* WON'T STOP YOU.

GO *ON*, IF YOU'RE THAT CONFIDENT, BLOW YOUR BRAINS OUT, RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW.

DO IT.

GO ON.

DO IT.

YOU SEE... WE *ARE* TWO-OF-A-KIND, YOU KNOW.

WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO...

...IS COME TO *REALIZE* THAT.

THE WASTELANDS.

A VISITOR HERE IS A RARITY.

BUT WHEN ONE DOES COME... IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME ONE.

AND NEVER WELCOME.

HAIL, BOZ!

IT GOES, MAESTRO.

IT HAS BEEN A WHILE.

TO BE PRECISE, IT HAS BEEN A YEAR, BOZ. SO TELL ME...

...HOW IS YOUR DAUGHTER COMING ALONG?

LEADER OF THE WASTELAND SURVIVALISTS! ARCHITECT OF A NEW FUTURE THROUGH VISION AND DILIGENCE.

HOW DOES IT GO, BOZ?

MAESTRO, PLEASE... EVER SINCE MY WIFE DIED, I HAVE NO ONE TO CARE FOR...NO...

...BESIDES... SHE... SHE IS MALNOURISHED AND... UNIMPRESSIVE, MAESTRO. AND...TO BE HONEST... HOMELY. NOT WORTH YOUR--

I'LL JUDGE THAT. BRING HER, BOZ.

NOW.

IT'S ALL RIGHT, DADDY.

HE... IS WHO HE IS.

MAESTRO, YOU... YOU SEE SHE'S JUST... CHOKE JUST A SCRAWNY THING. NO MUH... MEAT ON HER. SHE...

...she's just a baby...

SHHH.

DADDY... PLEASE... I'LL BE...

I'LL BE FINE.

HMM.
NO HEAD LICE, A GOOD START.
YOUR NAME?
CHAR, MAESTRO.
DISROBE, CHAR.
NO OPEN SORES.
FIRM.
GOOD TEETH.
YOU'VE DONE *WELL*, BOZ. YOU'VE INVESTED QUALITY YEARS IN HER. I SHALL *PROTECT* THAT INVESTMENT, I ASSURE YOU.
AND TO SHOW MY *APPRECIATION*... THIS FOOD SHOULD TIDE YOU OVER UNTIL THE CROPS COME IN.
THESE PEOPLE ARE *STARVING*.
WHY DON'T THEY LIVE IN THE CITY?
OUR RESOURCES ARE NOT INFINITE. BESIDES, BY AND LARGE, THEY'RE FAIRLY *HIDEOUS*. WHO WANTS THEM HANGING ABOUT? IT'S *DEPRESSING*, BUT I'M NOT HEARTLESS. I HAVE BEEN REINTRODUCING *NUTRIENTS* INTO THE GROUND. AT THE MOMENT THEY CAN *SURVIVE*... PERHAPS, SOMEDAY, EVEN *PROSPER*.
AND ALL I ASK IS WHATEVER THEY CAN *GIVE*.
ALL BENEFIT.

I DON'T LIKE THIS. I SAY WE ATTACK *NOW.*

NO. WE'LL STICK TO THE PLAN.

PLAN, FLAN, *BRAIN* PAN, JANIS. *SCAN* 'EM! THEY'RE STARTING TO LOOK *WAAAAY* TOO CHUMMY.

I SLIDE THAT, BUT GRAMPS SAYS WE HAVE TO HAVE *FAITH.*

JANIS... GRAMPS COULDN'T EVEN REMEMBER HIS *OWN NAME* THIS MORNING.

AND HE CALLED ME "ELVIS."

I SLIDE *THAT*, TOO.

AND HE CALLED ME "MARLO."

LOOK... WHY DON'T WE GO BACK IN TIME, AND GET *MORE* STUDLYS. SOME OF THOSE *OTHER* GUYS GRAMPS ALWAYS TALKS ABOUT.

'CAUSE WE GOT THE TIME MACHINE HELD TOGETHER WITH SPIT AND BALING WIRE AS IT *IS*, SKOOTER... PLUS, IT'S A *MAJOR* DRAIN ON THE JUICE. WE GOTTA USE IT *REAL* SPARE.

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, WE *HAVE* TO COUNT ON THE GREEN STUDLY.

YEAH, WELL I SURE HOPE IT DON'T TURN OUT *WORSE*, THAT'S ALL.

OOH. YOU SHOULD LET THE BEARD *GROW*. THE MAESTRO LOOKS *SO* HANDSOME IN HIS.

NOW ISN'T THAT *SWEET* OF YOU. *WASN'T* THAT SWEET OF HER, HULK?

TELL ME... DOES SHE *REMIND* YOU OF ANYONE?

IF YOU'RE REFERRING TO HER *PASSING* RESEMBLANCE TO BETTY, I NOTICED IT, YES. BUT... SHE LIVES TO *PLEASE*. SHE HAS NO MIND OF HER *OWN*.

"A MIND" WAS *BETTY'S* MAJOR DRAWBACK. DID WHAT *SHE* WANTED INSTEAD OF WHAT *I* WANTED. ALWAYS PRATTLING ABOUT HER "*FEELINGS*."

WASN'T *ALWAYS* THAT WAY, THOUGH. REMEMBER WHEN WE *FIRST* SAW HER? SHE ADORED US UNRESERVEDLY. IT WAS ONLY *LATER* SHE DEVELOPED HER MORE *ANNOYING* TRAITS.

I PRE-FER THE *MODERN* BETTY, THE SLAVE.

SORRY. MY TASTE RUNS TOWARDS WOMEN WHO ARE LESS VACUOUS... AND WITH MORE *GUTS*.

DON'T WORRY. YOU'LL *CHANGE* YOUR MIND, IN TIME.

COME ALONG.

YOU'RE HEALING *NICELY*. WE HAVE A CURIOUS PHYSIOLOGY ... SOME INJURIES TAKE US *LONGER* TO GET OVER THAN *OTHERS*.

I DISCOVERED, THROUGH AN *UN-FORTUNATE* FIRST-HAND ENCOUNTER, THAT A BROKEN NECK TAKES THE *LONGEST* TIME. STILL, YOU'LL BE *FULLY* RECOVERED SOON. HAVE YOU GIVEN THOUGHT TO WHAT YOU'LL DO THEN?

I'M SURE *YOU* HAVE.

I SEE IT IN YOUR EYES, HULK. YOU'RE *REPULSED* BY THE WORLD I'VE CREATED.

BUT YOU *CANNOT* JUDGE ME, HULK. FOR YOU HAVEN'T LIVED THE CENTURY OF TIME THAT WILL BRING YOU TO *MY* SITUATION. YOU CANNOT KNOW WHAT IT WAS *LIKE.*

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN RECALL, HUMANS TOUTED THEIR MORAL SUPERIORITY OVER ME. *I* WAS "THE *MONSTER.*"

BUT WHEN IT CAME DOWN TO IT, *THEY* WERE THE ONES WHO BROUGHT DESTRUCTION UPON THEMSELVES.

ME, A MONSTER? I WASN'T EVEN IN THEIR LEAGUE.

I'VE SPENT MY LIFE BEING IN THE *RIGHT* PLACE AT THE *RIGHT* TIME. WHY, IF I'D BEEN AT *GROUND ZERO* OF *ANY* OF THE BOMBS THAT DROPPED, I'D HAVE DIED... JUST AS *QUICKLY* AS ANY PUNY HUMAN.

BUT INSTEAD I MANAGED TO BE *ELSEWHERE*... AND BENEFITTED FROM THE RADIATION THAT LAY ABOUT LIKE WASTE MATERIAL.

RADIATION THAT KILLED *MILLIONS*... AND I JUST SOAKED IT UP. *I* COULD GO WHERE OTHERS *COULDN'T. DO* WHAT OTHERS COULDN'T. I *SURVIVED.*

POUR SOME DRINK FOR OUR GUEST, CHAR. *GOOD* GIRL.

NOW, HULK... *NOW* I'M ENTITLED TO WHAT THE WORLD TRIED TO KEEP *FROM* ME.

AND SO ARE *YOU.*

STAY *HERE*. RULE AT MY SIDE. DON'T YOU SEE, BRUCE...WE OWE HUMANS *NOTHING*! THEY'RE JUST TAKERS. THEY TAKE *ALL* WE HAVE, AND GIVE *NOTHING* BACK. THEY SPIT IN OUR FACE.

BULL. I HAVE FRIENDS, ALLIES, LOVED ONES. I HAVE...

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR YOU. *I* DO. *LISTEN* TO ME, BRUCE... THEY'RE GOING TO TAKE IT *ALL* AWAY. YOU'RE GOING TO END UP WITH *NOTHING* AND *NO ONE*. WHY GO BACK TO THAT... WHEN YOU CAN STAY HERE AND HAVE *EVERYTHING*?

YOU SAID *YOURSELF* TIME HAS SPLIT OFF. MAYBE WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU *WON'T* HAPPEN TO ME. MAYBE THINGS WILL BE *DIFFERENT*.

PERSECUTION. BETRAYAL. HATRED.

THESE THINGS *DON'T* CHANGE.

JUST TELL ME YOU'LL *THINK* ABOUT IT.

I'LL THINK ABOUT IT.

SOB

...Just a *baby*...

ONE OF MY DUTIES IS TO MAINTAIN THE *STATUS QUO.*

YOUR BEING HERE *UPSETS* THAT.

MY *APOLOGIES,* DR. BANNER.

...ON YOUR *OWN,* OR FROM YOUR DEAD FINGERS, MAKES *NO* DIFF TO ME.

DROP IT...

NOT AS UPSET AS *YOU'RE* GONNA BE, SQUIRREL-EYE.

NICE TRY, MINISTER.

YOU FIGURE THAT, BY GETTING RID OF *ME*, YOU NOT ONLY AVOID THE MAESTRO'S POWER BASE *INCREASING*...

...BUT MAYBE...JUST *MAYBE*...YOU WIPE HIM FROM EXISTENCE.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE MAESTRO'S *RIGHT*. ALTERNATE TIME TRACKS. REED RICHARDS DID A *PAPER* ON THAT. I WAS JUST OUT TO LULL HIM INTO A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY.

IN OTHER WORDS, WELCOME TO *PLAN B*.

YOUR MAESTRO *MISCALCULATED*. I RECOVERED *FASTER* THAN HE ALLOWED FOR, AND THEN I DID MY IMPRESSION OF THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO...

...EXCEPT *MY* ESCAPE WAY LEADS *IN* AS WELL AS OUT...AND I DIDN'T NEED A *SPOON*.

AND *YOU*, BUDDY BOY--YOU'RE LEADING US STRAIGHT TO THE FLARK-ING MAESTRO. *GOT* IT?

THERE'S TOO MANY *GUARDS* AROUND... BUT A SMART STUDLY LIKE THE MAESTRO, HE'S PROBABLY HAVING A SECRET PASSAGE IN AND OUT. *RIGHT*.

R-*RIGHT*.

AND A FINGER-IN-THE-PIE GUY LIKE YOU SCANS WHERE IT *IS*, DON'T HE?

JUST... JUST DON'T *HURT* ME.

NO *OFFENSE*, MINISTER...

...BUT YOU'RE *NOTHING*. WE TAKE OUT THE MAESTRO, AND WE'LL LET YOU GO.

'THO WE MIGHT GIVE YOU A GOOD *KICK* OR TWO T'SPEED YOU ALONG.

THERE. THE "SECRET" ENTRANCE.

I'M STARTIN' TO *MISLIKE* IT. I DIDN'T FIGURE ON FINDING A WAY WITH *NO* GUARDS AT ALL.

THE MAESTRO DOESN'T GENERALLY *HAVE* ALL THAT MANY *PERSONAL* GUARDS. HE REASONS THAT NO ONE WOULD DARE ATTACK HIM.

IS THAT A *FACT*?

HE REASONED *WRONG!*

OH, *MAESTRO!* KNOCK KNOCK!

WHO'S THERE?

IT'S BANNER.

IT'S BANNER WHO?

IT'S BANNER REALLY BAD DAY, HASN'T IT, DOCTOR?

A FELLOW NAMED *FORGE* MADE THIS, *YEARS* AGO... A GUN DESIGNED FOR THE *EXPRESS* PURPOSE OF KILLING ME. UNLUCKILY FOR *HIM*, HE NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO *AIM* IT.

I COULDN'T BEAR TO *DISPOSE* OF SUCH A FINE WEAPON... ALTHOUGH I DID KEEP IT *SECURED* SO THAT NO ONE COULD USE IT *AGAINST* ME.

FOOLS. DID YOU *SERIOUSLY* BELIEVE I COULD OUTTHINK MYSELF? I *KNEW* HE WAS DELAYING HIS RECOVERY. I *KNEW* HE WOULD SNEAK YOU INTO MY FORTRESS.

AND NOW... YOU'RE *MINE*. NOW I PUT AN *END* TO YOU PATHETIC FOOLS ONCE AND FOR *ALL*.

SCATTER!

TARGET YOUR ZONES AND *FIRE!!*

ARRHH!

UNHHH!!

FINISH THEM, YOU IDIOTS! CHASE THEM DOWN!

DO I HAVE TO DO EVERY-THING MYSELF!?

THE HULK! WHERE'S THE HULK? I SAW HIM CRASH THROUGH THAT WALL! WHERE'S HIS CORPSE?

HE'S...HE'S GONE, SIR! BUT THERE'S A TRAIL OF GREEN BLOOD...

HE COULDN'T HAVE GONE FAR, MAESTRO! YOU CAN STOP HIM!

I BEG OF YOU! AVENGE MY WOUNDED DIGNI-TY FOR THE WAY THEY FORCED ME TO LEAD THEM TO YOU! ONLY YOU CAN--

MINISTER...

...YOU'RE NOT FOOL-ING ANY-ONE.

SNAP

IT TRULY *SADDENS* ME, THE MINISTER THOUGHT I WAS UNAWARE THAT HE WOULD TRY TO *KILL* THE HULK...

...IN SOME *PATHETIC* HOPE OF TEMPORARILY ELIMINATING ME AND GRABBING POWER FOR *HIMSELF.*

AND THE HULK... HE NEVER EVEN QUESTIONED THE *CONVENIENCE* OF MY GIVING HIM A ROOM ON THE GROUND FLOOR.

THE *MINISTER* WAS NO SURPRISE. BUT THE *HULK* DISAPPOINTED ME.

I EXPECTED *BETTER* OF HIM.

SOME-BODY, HELP M--

HELP ME!

GO LOOSE! I GOT'CHA!

YOU'RE OLD BOZ'S KID, AREN'T'CHA?

MY... MY FATHER SAID YOU REBELS WOULD GET US ALL KILLED!

GET UP.

PUT YOUR HANDS ON TOP OF YOUR HEAD.

... AND ORDER YOUR PEOPLE TO SUR-RENDER.

IT'S THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO FOR THEM.

AND NO TRICKS.

YEAH, WELL, SLIDE 'IM MY LOVE. NOW SCRAM.

NO TRICKS.

BUT MY TREAT!

URKKHHH!!

IT'S A FLARKIN' *PAIN* KEEPING IT WASHED, AND TAKES *FOREVER* TO DRY...

...BUT EVERY SO OFTEN, IT'S *WORTH* IT.

LET'S GO.

THE BLOOD TRAIL'S GETTING *LIGHTER*. WHICH EITHER MEANS HE'S RUNNING OUT OF BLOOD...

...OR THAT HE'S HEALING.

WHAT'S THAT *MUSIC?*

SOUNDS FAMILIAR... REEDY.

OBVIOUSLY IT'S MEANT AS A *DISTRACTION* ...BUT IF I FINISH THE HULK *NOW*, OR FIVE *MINUTES* FROM NOW, WHAT *DIFFERENCE* WILL IT MAKE?

LET THEM *HAVE* THEIR DISTRACTION, THEN.

AH.

AS I *THOUGHT.*

JONES.

LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS STILL *PUMPING* AWAY, EH, OLD MAN?

YOU KNOW, JONES... OUT OF A MISPLACED SENSE OF GRATITUDE, I LET YOU LIVE *ENTIRELY* TOO LONG.

Henh.

Tell me about it.

Y'know, bruce... you used t'be a *Fun* guy. too bad you turned into such a *Dirtbag*.

YEARS AGO, I DID YOU A FAVOR AND *SAVED* YOUR LIFE. NOW I THINK I'LL DO YOU A FAVOR... AND *TAKE* IT.

GOOD-BYE, RICK.

SURPRISE.

WUNHHHH!!

ARRHHHGGG!

OH, THAT'S BEAUTIFUL.

THAT'S RICH.

USE ONE SOUVENIR TO *DEFEND* YOURSELF...

...AND GET *KILLED* BY ANOTHER.

YOU ALWAYS *WERE* AN IDIOT, JONES.

AND I *NEVER* LIKED YOU.

NEVER!

MY *ONLY* REGRET IS THAT YOU DIDN'T LIVE TO SEE ME WRITE A FINALE TO THIS *INANE* LITTLE ADVENTURE OF Y--

EH?

RAARRRR!!

AKKKHHH!!

LET'S SEE YOU *HEAL*...

...WHEN I *CUT* YOU IN *HALF*!!

ARHHH!!

YOU...

...YOU ONLY GET...

...ONE CHANCE...

...AT ME...

...AND YOU *BLEW* IT!

YOU *COULD* HAVE SNUCK IN... GOTTEN IN *CLOSE*... STRUCK *BEFORE* I KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING.

BUT FOR A MOMENT, YOU REVERTED TO *TYPE*.

AND THAT MOMENT WILL *COST* YOU...

...YOUR *LIFE!*

HAH! NOW *THERE'S* A THOUGHT!

AMERICA'S SHIELD WAS NEVER A THREAT TO US *BEFORE*...BECAUSE CAP COULDN'T HURL IT WITH SUFFICIENT FORCE TO PENETRATE.

BUT THOR'S *HAMMER*, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS *ALWAYS* LETHAL!

AND IN *MY* HANDS, IT WILL BE--

UNFFF!

I DON'T *BELIEVE* IT! I'M STRONGER THAN *EVER!* THOR IS *LONG* GONE...

...AND I *STILL* CAN'T LIFT THE DAMNED THING?!

Have to...be *worthy*...

...only "damned thing" here... is *you*...

NO MORE *WEAPONS*, MAESTRO! NO MORE *TRICKS!*

NO MORE INSANITY!

OOOOFF!

GAAACCKK

AHHHHH

CAN'T COUGH SEE! WHA--?!

BETTY BANNER

Nice goin'... Betty...

...I'VE HATED THEM ALL...

...BUT NONE OF THEM...

...NONE OF THEM...

...HAS MADE ME AS SICK AS YOU DO!

THE LEADER... THE ABOMINATION... THE U-FOES...

YOU'RE COMPLAINING TO *ME*?!

I TRIED TO TALK *SENSE* INTO YOU!

OOOOFF!

TRIED TO *WARN* YOU!

AND *YOU*...YOU BUFFOON...

...YOU CLOSED YOUR *EYES* TO IT! IMAGINE HOW *SICKENING* IT IS TO SEE SOMEONE SO *BRILLIANT* AND YET SO *STUPID!* AND IMAGINE WHEN THAT SOMEONE IS *YOU!*

WE COULD HAVE BEEN *GODS* TOGETHER!

SHOULD'VE REMEMBERED... THE *MADDER* YOU GET...THE *STRONGER* YOU GET...

...AND YOU'RE *COMPLETELY* MAD.

YOU COULD HAVE BEEN *WORSHIPPED*, HULK. NOW... NOW YOU'LL JUST BE *MOURNED*...

...PROVIDED ANYONE IS *LEFT* TO MOURN YOU, WHICH I *SERIOUSLY* DOUBT.

YOU'RE FIGHTING THE *INEVITABLE*, HULK. I'M SIMPLY THE *FINAL* PRODUCT OF NATURAL SELECTION. THE *STRONG* SURVIVE.

I'M THE STRONGEST. I *SURVIVED*.

WHEN YOU GO AGAINST *ME*, YOU GO AGAINST THE LAWS OF *NATURE*.

ADMIT IT! YOU'LL DIE AT MY HANDS MOMENTARILY ANYWAY. LET YOUR *LAST* WORDS BE *HONEST* ONES!

REMOVE THE *BLINDERS* FROM YOUR EYES AND SEE THE *TRUTH*!

WRONG.

YOU'RE *HISTORY*.

WHAT ARE YOU *DOING*?!

WELCOME TO *PLANET* MAESTRO.

I AM THE FUTURE!

ACTIVATE

THE TIME MACHINE! DOOM'S TIME MACHINE!

STOP! WAIT!

YOU CAN'T DO THIS!

I'M THE MAESTRO, YOU BRAIN-LESS FOOL!

I ORDER YOU TO STOP!!

I ORDER YOU TO--

WOW.

MAJOR WRECKAGE.

HOLD IT! WE GOT YOU DEAD TO--!

Gramps?

G-GOT HIM, RICK. NOW JUST HANG ON...

Hang on... you're *yankin'* me...

...Saw everything...I *needed* to see...always *loved* ya, man... y'know...

Get... the *bad* guy... Bruce...?

...Hey... look... it's the *kids*...

...kids bet me... wouldn't have the nerve... t'sneak past the *guards*...

...wouldn't want 'em...t'think I was...chick...

...

WHERE... UH...

WHERE DID THE *MAESTRO* GO?

TO FACE THE MUSIC.

--STOP!

THAT... IMBECILE!

IT DOESN'T MATTER *WHERE* HE'S SENT ME. IF IT'S THE PAST, I'LL LIVE TO *FACE* HIM AGAIN. IF IT'S THE *FUTURE*, I'LL CONQUER, JUST AS I...

...WHAT'S *THAT*? MILES OFF IN THE DISTANCE?

A MAN IN A *COAT*? AND... SOME SORT OF... LOOKS LIKE A JEEP...

...RUNNING TOWARDS A...

...a *teenager*...

...MAKE THEM THINK I'M CHICKEN?

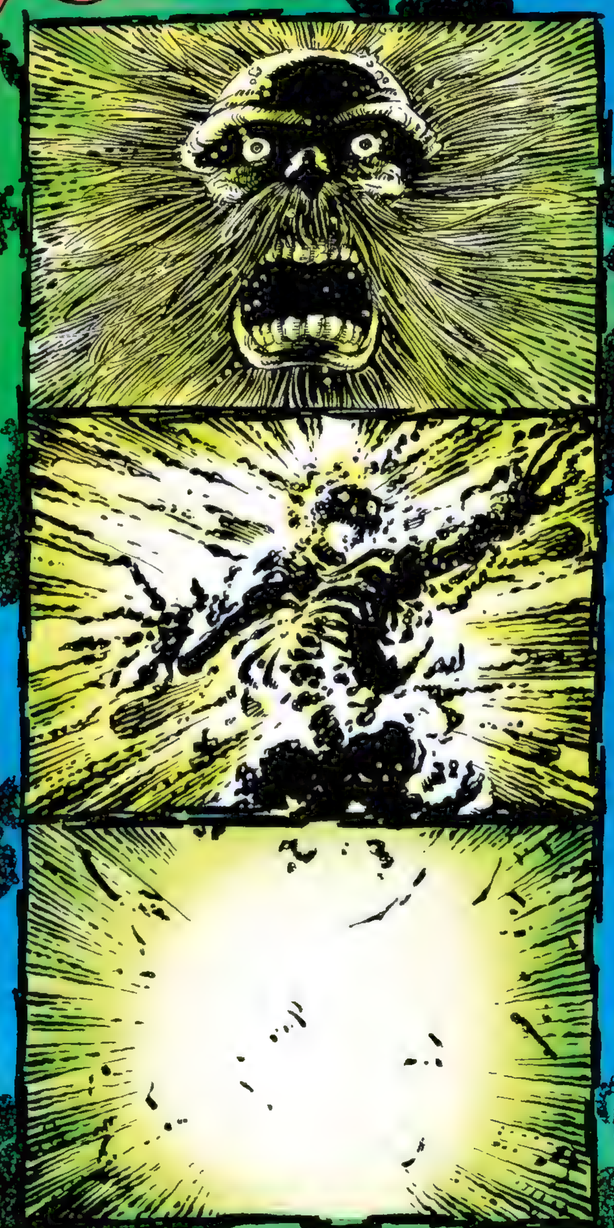
COME **ON**, YOU FOOL! WE HAVE TO REACH THE PROTECTIVE TRENCH BEFORE THE *BOMB* GOES OFF!

BOMB?

G-BOMB U.S. ARMY MODEL 01-G

oh... no...

NNNOOOOOOOOOO



CAN YOU TELL, CHAR?

THE MORNING... IT HAS THE SCENT OF *FREEDOM* ON IT.

SKOOTER, WHERE'S THE *HULK*? WE HAVE THE TIME MACHINE POWERED UP AG--

NOT *NOW*, MAN.

MY COUSIN STORMED THE MAESTROS FORTRESS AND ALL I GOT WAS THIS FLARKIN T-SHIRT!

NOT NOW.

TRUST ME, JANIS. THIS IS WHAT RICK WOULD HAVE WANTED.

MOLDERING IN THE GROUND WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN HIS *STYLE*.

HE WOULD HAVE WANTED A SHOT AT ONE LAST ADVENTURE.

YOU SPREAD THE SPECIAL ADHESIVE ON THE SHIELD?

YUP. JUST LIKE YOU *SAID*, BRUCE.

GOOD GIRL.

ASHES TO ASHES, RICK.

RICHARD M. JONES 19 20

DUST TO DUST.

WHERE DO YOU THINK IT'LL *LAND*, BRUCE?

GOD WILLING... SOMEWHERE *EXCITING*.

FAREWELL ...MY BEST FRIEND.

SEE YOU YESTERDAY.

"We have met the enemy, and he is us."

—Walt Kelly, Pogo

The testing of the first Gamma Bomb thrust upon Robert Bruce Banner that which he would come to believe would be his greatest nightmare: His unwilling transformation into the incredible Hulk. Much has happened to him since that time, and now the mind of Bruce Banner is completely in command of the gamma-powered strength of the Hulk. One would have thought the nightmares were over.

One would have been wrong.

Thrust nearly a century into the future—into a post-holocaust, dystopian world—Bruce Banner discovers that his nightmares have a whole new name:

The Maestro.

Holding a fear-torn world in his unyielding, tyrannical grip, the Maestro fears nothing and no one. Not even, it would seem, himself. For the Maestro is, in fact, the future incarnation of the Hulk himself. Unchallenged in strength, undefeated in battle, and unhampered by morality, the Maestro does not seem to consider the Hulk a threat.

It is the Hulk's intention to change his mind. Witnessing the Maestro's oppression, he resolves to rid this world of this dark reflection of himself.

It will not be that simple. The battle between the Hulk and the Maestro will be played out on many levels, as the Hulk finds himself fighting not only for his survival, but for his very sanity. Because he knows that, once already, he has given in to the forces that shaped the Maestro. Will the Hulk be able to rid the world of the despotic Maestro...or will this be another case of history repeating itself? What hope is there for the world if the Hulk becomes that which he is struggling against?

Herein, the conclusion to one of the most anticipated, most discussed Hulk stories ever. "Future Imperfect," the first-ever Hulk special format tale, presenting the ultimate confrontation between the Hulk and his future self, the Maestro.

Only one can survive.

And maybe not even one.

HULK

BROKEN WORLDS

BOOK ONE

MARVEL 1 .com

THE FUTURE.

100 YEARS FROM NOW.

CAN YOU TELL, CHAR? THE MORNING...

...IT HAS THE SCENT OF FREEDOM ON IT.

Post Mortem

FREE... FATHER? HOW...

HOW AM I EVER SUPPOSED TO BE FREE?

CHAR, YOU'RE...YOU'RE TREMBLING. I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

HOW CAN YOU BE EXPECTED TO UNDERSTAND, FATHER! NO ONE WHO SAW THE THINGS I SAW, WHO--

WHO WAS FORCED TO DO THE THINGS I WAS...

CHAR, MY CHILD!

WAIT!

NO ONE HAS ANY PROBLEMS ANYMORE, THANKS TO YOU, STUDLY.

PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS HAVE PROBLEMS, JANIS. IF IT'S NOT ONE THING, IT'S ANOTHER.

I SCAN THAT. STILL... THE MAESTRO WAS A PRETTY BIG *"THING."*

"RULED ALL OF DYSTOPIA LIKE THE DICTATOR HE WAS.

"I STILL HAVE TROUBLE WRAPPIN' MYSELF 'ROUND THE NOTION THAT HE'S YOU. OR WAS YOU. OR WILL BE YOU.

"EVERY TIME GRAMPS WOULD TRY TO SCAN IT TO ME, I'D GET BRAIN CRAMPS."

"GRAMPS." YOU MEAN RICK. HE WAS...WHAT? YOUR GREAT-GRANDFATHER? GREAT-GREAT?

I ASKED HIM ONCE. SAID HE LOST TRACK.

YUP. SOUNDS LIKE RICK.

JANIS! THERE'S A BUNCH OF TOWN LEADERS WHO WANT TO MEET WITH THE DOC HERE!

WHAT "TOWN LEADERS?" WHERE'D THEY COME FROM? WEREN'T NONE BEFORE.

THEY STARTED CROPPING UP RIGHT AFTER WORD GOT OUT THE MAESTRO WAS GONE.

FIGURES.

SOME ARE WHISPERING MAESTRO AIN'T REALLY GONE. SAID THEY WANNA SEE SCAN HIS BODY.

IMPOSSIBLE.

THEN HOW DO THEY KNOW HE'S REALLY FINISHED?

TRUST ME--

"--HE GOT A PERMANENT TIME OUT...

"...COURTESY OF THE SAME TIME MACHINE THAT JANIS USED TO BRING ME HERE SO I COULD GET RID OF THE MAESTRO FOR YOU."

TELL THESE SO-CALLED LEADERS THAT I'LL MEET WITH 'EM LATER. WE'LL PUT TOGETHER SOME SORT OF WORKING GOVERNMENT BY THE END OF THE DAY.

BUT--

SKOOTER... HERE'S WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN. YOU'RE GOING TO STAY HERE AND MAKE SURE JANIS AND I HAVE SOME PRIVACY FOR A LITTLE CEREMONY...

...THE FINAL DISPOSITION OF RICK JONES' ASHES, COURTESY OF ONE OF THE MANY TROPHIES HE COLLECTED THROUGH THE DECADES.

AFTER THAT...

WE WILL LET EVERYONE, FROM THE LOWLIEST OF THE LOW HERE IN DYSTOPIA...

...TO ALL THE SERVANTS AND SLAVES WHO HAVE BEEN FREED...

...TO ALL THOSE HARDWORKING FARMERS, THE WASTELAND SURVIVALISTS...

...TELL THEM ALL...

...THAT EVERYTHING IS GOING TO WORK OUT FINE.

CHAR! WAIT, I SAID!

CHAR! YOUR FATHER *CALLS* TO YOU!

WHY SHOULD SHE ATTEND YOU, BOZ, YOU WEAK OLD NOTHING.

OUT OF MY WAY, LOTHAR!

YOU HAVE NO MORE CAUSE TO ORDER ME ABOUT THAN YOUR FOOL OF A FATHER, CHAR.

LESS, ACTUALLY, SINCE YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A SACK OF MEAT, DEFILED BY THE MAESTRO.

A FATE YOUR FATHER WILLINGLY SURRENDERED YOU TO.

HOW... DARE YOU!

I WOULD HAVE DIED BEFORE ALLOWING THE MAESTRO TO TAKE HER!

AND YET HE *DID* TAKE HER, AND YOU'RE STILL ALIVE. FUNNY, ISN'T IT.

AND NOW THE MAESTRO IS DEAD.

NO THANKS TO *YOU.*

THAT IS TRUE. BUT NOW WE CAN MOVE FORWARD INTO A PERFECT FUTURE...

LED BY WHO? BY YOU?

YOU COULD NOT EVEN PROTECT YOUR OWN DAUGHTER! HOW CAN YOU HOPE TO PROTECT THE WASTELAND SURVIVALISTS!

IT WAS NOT HIS FAULT! I WENT WILLINGLY!

TO SAVE YOUR FATHER FROM THE MAESTRO! YOU MAKE MY POINT FOR ME!

IT'S TIME WE SURVIVALISTS HAD A LEADER WHO WAS UP FOR THE CHALLENGE!

WE WOULD HAVE BEEN DEAD *YEARS* AGO IF NOT FOR ME, YOU UNGRATEFUL--!

YOUR OWN DAUGHTER RUNS FROM YOU! WHY SHOULD WE MOVE TOWARD YOU?

LEAVE ME OUT OF YOUR PATHETIC-- *ARRRHHHH!!!*

TELL ME, CHAR...DID THE MAESTRO'S BEAUTIES TEACH YOU TRICKS TO SATISFY A MAN? I FANCY YOU'LL SHOW THEM TO ME IF I *"ASK"* NICELY.

LET HER GO, LOTHAR, AND GET BACK TO WORK, OR I SWEAR...

YOU SWEAR WHAT? FRIGHTEN ME, OLD MAN.

I DARE YOU.

ASHES TO ASHES, RICK. DUST TO DUST.

WHERE DO YOU THINK IT WILL LAND, BRUCE?

GOD WILLING, SOMEWHERE EXCITING.

I SWEAR THAT THE GODS WILL STRIKE YOU DOWN!

REALLY?

ALMIGHTY GODS! I, LOTHAR, WILL NOW SHOW YOU WHAT I THINK OF BOZ'S THREATS!

PTUI

WHERE'S YOUR VENGEANCE NOW, BOZ?

EEEEEEEE!!!

SHHHUK

OH MY--!!

RENAR...TOBIAS...KINDLY CLEAN UP THAT MESS. THE BODY AND THE HEAD. MULCH IT FOR FERTILIZER. AS FOR THE REST OF YOU...

FFTTUMPP

ANYONE ELSE HAVE ANYTHING THEY WANT TO SAY?

ANY CHALLENGES THEY WISH TO ISSUE?

NO? GOOD. CHAR... COME. YOU DESERVE TO REST.

YES, FATHER.

BY THE WAY...I HATE TO BRING THIS UP...

WHY ARE YOU WHISPERING, CHILD?

I THINK I MAY BE CARRYING THE MAESTRO'S CHILD, AND THOUGHT WE SHOULD KEEP THAT TO OURSELVES FOR AWHILE.

GOOD INSTINCT, MY CHILD. GOOD INSTINCT.

THE END

MARVEL COMICS

JAN
#460

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

THE INCREDIBLE HULK®

DAVID
KUDLER
FARMER

BRUCE BANNER™ IS BACK!

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
— HAMLET

PETER DAVID · WRITER
ADAM KUBERT · PENCILS
MARK FARMER · INKER
LOVERN KINDZIERSKI/ DIGITAL CHAMELEON · COLORS
JOHN E. WORKMAN, JR. · LETTERS
BOBBIE CHASE · EDITOR
BOB HARRAS · EDITOR IN CHIEF

STAN LEE Presents

HOMECOMING

HE IS CALLED THE INCREDIBLE HULK...

...AND THIS IS WHERE HIS LIFE BEGAN.

HE IS CALLED ROBERT BRUCE BANNER...

...AND THIS IS WHERE HIS LIFE ENDS.

BOOM!

HUH? WHO SAID THAT?

THIS ...THIS PLACE LOOKS...

...FAMILIAR FOR...

...SOME REASON.

AND... THERE WAS A...VOICE, I THINK... THAT...

BRUCE! I SAID BREAKFAST IS READY! DON'T MAKE ME CALL AGAIN.

SOME MONTHS AGO, BRUCE BANNER WAS TORN APART FROM HIS OTHER SELF AND THRUST INTO ANOTHER REALITY. THE SEPARATION CREATED A SORT OF RIFT BETWEEN THEM, A NEXUS THROUGH WHICH ENERGY BUBBLED LIKE LAVA, PROGRESSIVELY WEAKENING THE HULK WHO'D BEEN LEFT BEHIND.

BUT RECENTLY, THE TWO OF THEM WERE SLAMMED BACK TOGETHER AGAIN, AND THE CATACLYSMIC COLLISION OF ATOMS RELEASED AN EXPLOSION OF ENERGY THAT TORE OPEN A **HOLE** IN A POCKET REALITY...

...AND CATAPULTED THE HULK AND ASSORTED OTHER BEINGS BACK TO THEIR HOMEWORLD.

HOWEVER...UP TO THAT POINT, THE HULK HAD BEEN DYING...HIS BODILY SYSTEMS BREAKING DOWN, OVERLOADED WITH ENERGY SO ALIEN AND INTRUSIVE THAT IT WAS EATING HIM ALIVE, LIKE CANCER.

AND THE TRAUMA OF REUNION...MAY WELL HAVE BEEN MORE THAN HE COULD WITHSTAND.

FA... FATHER ?

MADE YOU SOME DEVILED EGGS, SON. THOUGHT IT WAS AN APPROPRIATE WAY TO WELCOME YOU TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE REST OF YOUR AFTERLIFE.

NO. I'M NOT BUYING INTO THIS.

THIS IS A DREAM. AND YOU'RE DEAD.

SO ARE YOU, KIDDO.

NONSENSE.

HUH? WH-- WHERE AM I?

"ISN'T IT OBVIOUS, BOY?

"YOU'RE IN HELL."

HE'S LED MANY LIVES, THE HULK HAS. HE'S BEEN A SCHEMER. HE'S BEEN A BRAINLESS BRUTE. HE WAS A LEG-BREAKER NAMED "MR. FIXIT" IN LAS VEGAS. HE WAS THE LEADER OF HEROES AND THE DESTROYER OF DREAMS.

HE'S LOOKED INTO THE FACES OF MANY EVILS. FROM THE LEADER TO HIS OWN FUTURE SELF... THE MAESTRO... TO GENUINE ASPECTS OF SATANIC EVIL SUCH AS CLOOT AND MEPHISTO... TO HIS OWN FATHER.

HE'S STOOD ON FAR-OFF WORLDS, FOUGHT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA, DESCENDED TO MICROSCOPIC UNIVERSES.

BUT IN ALL THAT TIME... HE HAS NEVER LEAKED SO MUCH ENERGY AND RADIATION WHILE IN HIS DEATH THROES THAT HE SET A PACK OF HARMLESS JACK-RABBITS ON FIRE.

BEEN A LONG TIME COMING, BRUCE. STARTED THE DAY YOU KILLED ME. AND THEN CLOOT, BACK IN VEGAS... HE SHOWED YOU WHAT WAS WAITING.

THEN MEPHISTO SHOWED UP AT RICK JONES'S WEDDING, REMEMBER? YOU THOUGHT YOU BEAT HIM. BUT HE WAS LAUGHING AT YOU, 'CAUSE IT WAS ALL A SET-UP.

AND I KNEW YOU WERE COMING SOON. THAT'S WHY I STARTED HAUNTING YOU. I WAS THAT DARNED ANXIOUS TO START SPENDING QUALITY TIME WITH YOU.

OMEN OTHER END

HAVE SEE ME

HAVE SEE ME

I SEE YOU

HEY... FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING.

I'M TRYING TO BE REASONABLE, BRUCE. NO REASON NOT TO.

I'VE FINALLY WON. FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH YOU.

FOR YEARS, I'VE EXISTED IN YOUR MIND... ON YOUR TURF. NOW YOU'RE ON MINE, FOREVER.

YOUR BODY'S TAKEN TOO MUCH OF A BEATING, BOY... STRETCHED BEYOND EVEN YOUR ABILITY TO HEAL.

YOU'RE FINISHED, BOY! FINISHED!

IT WAS TO BE A NEW **BEGINNING** FOR THE HULK AND BRUCE. TOGETHER AGAIN FOR THE FIRST TIME. MERGED AFTER AN EXTENDED SEPARATION, **BACK** WITH A **NEW** PERSPECTIVE.

A REBIRTH.

BUT THE PROBLEM WITH REBIRTHS IS THAT THEY ARE NOT EXEMPT FROM ANY OF THE NORMAL HAZARDS OF ANY BIRTH ...INCLUDING, **UNFORTUNATELY**...

...BEING STILLBORN.

EXCUSE ME. **EXCUSE** ME, PLEASE. HOW DO I GET **OUT** OF HERE?

EXCUSE ME. I'M LOOKING FOR A BUS OR TRAIN STATION. AIRPORT. **ANYTHING.**

HELLO? I SAID I NEED TO GET **OUT.**

YOU **DON'T** GET OUT, DOCTOR BANNER. YOU CARRY IT **WITHIN** YOU. **ALWAYS.**

THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT THE HULK IS STILLBORN.

NOT YET.

UNHHHH

YOU HAD A GOOD **RUN**, DOCTOR, AND WENT OUT **SPECTACU-LARLY.**

BUT YOU RELEASED TOO MUCH ENERGY ALL AT **ONCE**. YOUR BODY'S BROKEN DOWN, AND YOU...YOU'RE **DEAD**.

AS IF I'LL LISTEN TO **YOU**, LEADER. A MEGALO-MANIAC VILLAIN WHO EATS, SLEEPS, AND BREATHES **LIES**. DO YOU THINK I'M **STUPID**?

DO YOU THINK I **CARE**?

IT'S WHAT I'VE ALWAYS **TOLD** YOU, BRUCE. YOU KNOW **NOTHING** OF YOUR OWN POTENTIAL.

CHOP! SLICE! CUT! CUT! CUT! CHOP! CHOP!

NEARBY, THE REMAINS OF THE MAESTRO LIE SILENTLY... TELLING NO TALES, AS DEAD MEN TEND NOT TO DO, AT LEAST IN THIS SPHERE.

THE MAESTRO, THE HULK'S FUTURE SELF, SENT BACK THROUGH TIME TO DIE AT THE DETONATION OF THE FIRST GAMMA BOMB. TO DIE AT THE MOMENT OF HIS BIRTH. HIS OWN ALPHA **AND** OMEGA.

DEATH DOESN'T HAVE THE SAME ***MEANING*** TO US AS IT DOES TO ***NORMAL*** BEINGS.

OH, ***REALLY***, MAESTRO? IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN WHY AM I SUPPOSEDLY ***DEAD***...

...AND ***YOU*** AS WELL?

IT WON'T LAST. GIVEN ENOUGH TIME, WE COME ***BACK***. THREE MINUTES, THREE HOURS, THREE DECADES...WE ***ALWAYS*** BEAT THE ODDS AND RETURN.

THAT STRAINS ***CREDULITY***, DON'T YOU THINK?

OF ***COURSE***. WHAT PART OF "INCREDIBLE" DON'T YOU ***GET***?

HERE'S SOMETHING *ELSE* INCREDIBLE. ALL THESE YEARS, FOR NO *DISCERNIBLE* REASON, YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO FIND YOUR WAY *BACK* TO THE SITE OF THE GAMMA BOMB BLAST, LIKE YOU HAD *RADAR*.

NOPE. YOU HAD *ME*. ME HERE ALL ALONG, *CALLING* TO YOU, *HAUNTING* THE AREA.

MY SPIRIT *SUMMONING* YOU THROUGH THAT SAME PSYCHIC KNACK YOU HAVE THAT LETS YOU SEE *ASTRAL FORMS*.

I KNEW THAT ULTIMATELY, *YOU* HELD THE KEY TO MY RETURN. I ABSORB GAMMA RADIATION, BRUCE. I *TOLD* YOU THAT.

AND WHAT BETTER SOURCE TO KEEP ABSORBING IT FROM, TO *REENERGIZE* MYSELF.., THAN YOU? A LITTLE AT A TIME, YEAR AFTER YEAR...

I DON'T BUY THAT FOR A *MOMENT*. DEAD IS *DEAD*.

OH, YEAH? TELL IT TO *MARLO*.

WHAT THE *DEVIL--?!*

COULD BE.

THE COP'S NAME IS LANCELOT FLINN... ...SO NAMED THANKS TO HIS MOTHER'S LOVE FOR ARTHURIAN LEGEND.

NMPD

LANCE IS 5'6", A BIT OVERWEIGHT, BUT A CONFIDENT **PILOT**. AS HE FLIES OVER THE BIZARRE BURNING DESERT PIT, HE RADIOS BACK TO HQ, GIVING A STEADY REPORT ON THE FANTASTIC GREEN FIRE THAT BLAZES BELOW HIM.

BRUCE! YOU RAN OUT ON ME WITH-OUT EATING THE NICE *BREAKFAST* I MADE FOR YOU!

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO BE *PUNISHED* FOR THIS!

OHELL!

WASN'T *NICE*, SON! NOT NICE *A'TALL!*

OH, COME *ON*, SON! DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE A DEER IN THE HEADLIGHTS!

BE A *MAN!* DO SOME-THING!

AND THEN, LIKE THE TONGUE OF THE DEVIL, A BURST OF **FLAME** LICKS UPWARD, CARESSING THE ENGINE JUST BELOW THE ROTORS.

AND JUST LIKE THAT, LANCE FLINN IS SUDDENLY CLOSER TO **DEATH** THAN HE'S EVER BEEN.

ATTA BOY! *THAT'S* THE SPIRIT! NO PUN *INTENDED!*

LEADER! MAESTRO! C'MON! DON'T BE LEFT OUT!

WE WANT TO GIVE BRUCE A ***PROPER*** INTRODUCTION TO HIS NEW HOME!

THE COPTER MOTOR EXPLODES AS LANCE JUMPS CLEAR BARELY IN TIME ...ALTHOUGH IN THIS INSTANCE, "CLEAR" IS AN EXTREMELY RELATIVE TERM.

FOR IN THIS INSTANCE, LANCE FLINN HAS MOST DEFINITELY GONE FROM THE FRYING PAN...INTO THE FIRE.

DO YOU GET IT, BRUCE? DO YOU FINALLY UNDER-STAND?

WE'RE YOUR OWN PERSONAL TRINITY. ME, THE MAESTRO, AND THE LEADER...

...THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE UNHOLY GHOST!

AS THE PILOT SCREAMS FOR HELP, THE THOUGHT **UPPERMOST** ON HIS MIND...

...IS THAT HE HAS A DATE THIS FRIDAY WITH KATE HENSHAW, A GORGEOUS LITTLE **BLONDE** IN ACCOUNTING. IT'S A DATE RESULTING FROM A DOGGED **SIX-MONTH** CAMPAIGN.

AND IF HE DIES NOW, ALL THAT TIME WAS **WASTED.**

THUS DO PEOPLE **PRIORITIZE** AT MOMENTS OF CRISIS.

WE HAVE SUCH A **WONDER-FUL** RE-LATIONSHIP, YOU AND I.

YOU HATED ME, DESPISED ME, **KILLED** ME.

AND THEN SPENT YOUR LIFE LOATHING THE **HULK**...

MOSTLY BECAUSE HE REMINDED YOU OF **ME.**

STOPPP PPPPP PPPP!!!

AND THEN... LANCE FLINN THINKS WHAT MIGHT VERY WELL BE HIS LAST THREE WORDS, NAMELY:"

"OH ... MY GOD."

IT'S PAYBACK TIME, BRUCE! BECAUSE THE HULK ISN'T HERE TO HELP YOU!

IT'S JUST YOU AND ME, BRUCE! YOU AND ME AND MY FRIENDS, FOR ALL ETERNITY!

HELLO

A LIFETIME OF PUNISHMENT FOR WHAT YOU DID TO ME, YOU WEAK, SNIVELLING LITTLE NOTHING! YOUR NEW REALITY UNTIL THE END OF TIME ITSELF!

FOR I ALWAYS SAW THE EVIL WITHIN YOU, BRUCE! ALWAYS! I'M THE ONE PERSON YOU WERE NEVER ABLE TO FOOL! NO WONDER YOU HATED ME!

I HATED YOU... FOR FAR BETTER REASONS THAN THAT.

I HATE YOU BECAUSE, AS *INSANE* AS IT SOUNDS... NO CHILD EVER STOPS TRYING, DEEP DOWN, TO WIN HIS PARENTS' *APPROVAL.*

AND YOU *REJECTED* ME ALMOST FROM BIRTH.

I HATE YOU BECAUSE YOU TERRORIZED MY *MOTHER* ...AND *ME*...

BECAUSE YOU MADE ME AFRAID TO LOVE... TO HATE...

YOU MADE ME AFRAID OF *EVERYTHING!*

AND I *WON'T* BE *AFRAID* ANYMORE!

EVEN AS THE HULK SCOOPS UP THE COP IN HIS POWERFUL ARMS ...EVEN AS THE COP'S SHRIEKS FADE IN CONFUSION...EVEN AS THE HULK'S BODY *SHIELDS* HIM AGAINST THE FLAMES...

...THE COP SLOWLY COMES TO REALIZE...THAT IT'S AS IF THE HULK ISN'T QUITE *THERE*.

IT'S AS IF HE'S *SLEEPWALKING*.

IN OLDEN DAYS, WHEN SOMEONE WAS SLEEPWALKING, IT WAS BELIEVED THEIR SOUL WAS WANDERING THE EARTH OR OTHER SPHERES. IT WAS *FURTHER* BELIEVED THAT WAKING A SLEEPWALKER WAS *DANGEROUS*, SINCE THEIR SOUL WOULD BE TRAPPED OUTSIDE THEIR BODY.

SUPERSTITIONS REGARDING ROUSING A SLEEPWALKER REMAIN TO *THIS* DAY.

LANCE FLINN DECIDES *NOW* IS *NOT* THE TIME TO RISK IT.

CHOKING ME NOW...? THINK YOU'LL GET RID OF ME...BY *KILLING* ME?

BEEN THERE. DONE THAT.

THE SON YOU TERRORIZED IS *GONE*, FATHER. THE HULK CAN BE OF USE TO ME FOR *OUTER* STRENGTH...

...BUT INNER STRENGTH IS *MINE*, NOW. AND YOU'LL *NEVER* DEPRIVE ME OF THAT AGAIN.

AND THEN... FROM ON HIGH... THERE COMES...

LIGHT...?

WHAT IS THAT... THAT *LIGHT?* WHERE IS IT...?

IS THAT...?

BETTY?

BETTY! LORD IN HEAVEN... IS THAT *YOU*?!?

HOW DISGUSTINGLY *SYMBOLIC.* BETTY... THE WIFELY LIGHT OF OUR LIFE, COME TO OFFER *SALVATION* ONCE MORE.

SHUT UP, MAESTRO! YOU'RE NOT FIT TO SPEAK HER NAME!

BRUCE ...I'M *HERE* FOR YOU. YOU DON'T *BELONG* HERE. COME UP TO ME, MY LOVE!

YOU'VE CARRIED ME WITHIN YOU *ALWAYS*. NOW LET YOUR FAITH BRING YOU THE *REST* OF THE WAY.

THIS IS CHOPPER 3. I CAN SEE FLINN'S CHOPPER FROM HERE, BUT THERE'S NO SIGN OF HIM.

HE CAN'T HAVE SURVIVED THAT...

WAIT! WAIT, WHO'S THAT !?!

WHERE IN HELL DID HE COME FROM ?!?

COULDN'T ...TELL YOU.

NEVER GOT...THE EXACT ADDRESS.

THE NEXT MINUTES ARE SPENT IN CONFUSION AS CPR IS APPLIED TO THE DOWNED FLINN... WHO SLOWLY RESPONDS AS A RESCUE UNIT IS FLOWN IN.

IT IS NOT UNTIL LATER THAT THE COPS REALIZE THAT THE STRANGE MAN FROM THE PIT IS GONE.

AND IT IS NOT UNTIL MUCH **LATER** THAN THAT... LONG **AFTER** THE FIRE HAS BURNED OUT, LONG **AFTER** THE COPS HAVE **GONE** BACK TO THEIR HEADQUARTERS...

...THAT THEY REALIZE JUST **WHO** IT WAS WHO HAD EMERGED FROM THE PIT.

WORD IMMEDIATELY CIRCULATES TO ALL ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN THE TERRITORY THAT SOMEHOW, IN SOME WAY...

...ROBERT BRUCE BANNER HAS RETURNED.

THE TRUE IRONY OF THAT ANNOUNCEMENT IS:

THEY DON'T KNOW THE **HALF** OF IT.

NEXT ISSUE:

THUNDERBOLT ROSS... TO THE RESCUE?

MARVEL COMICS®

THE INCREDIBLE HULK®

FEB
#461

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DAVID
BREWER
PEPOY

INCREDIBLE HULK #461

STAN LEE presents

SELF DESTRUCTION

THE ANCIENT GREEKS HAD **NUMEROUS** DEEP THINKERS AND PHILOSOPHERS WHOSE INSIGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS WERE SO **TRUTHFUL** THAT THEY REMAIN WITH US TO **THIS** DAY.

THEY ALSO BELIEVED IN A VARIETY OF **MYTHS**. IN THE EXISTENCE OF GODLIKE BEINGS SUCH AS ZEUS AND HERCULES. TRUE AGAIN, AS IT TURNS OUT.

FURTHERMORE, THEY FELT THAT THE UNDERWORLD WAS A PLACE FROM WHICH IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR THE DEAD TO **RETURN**.

AS IT SO HAPPENS... AS PROVEN BY THE PRESENCE OF THE HULK'S FUTURE INCARNATION, THE **MAESTRO**...

...THEY WERE **RIGHT** AGAIN.

PETER DAVID · WRITER
DAVID BREWER · GUEST PENCILER
ANDREW PEPOY · GUEST INKER
IGOR KORDEY/ DIGITAL CHAMELEON · COLORS
JOHN E. WORKMAN, JR. · LETTERS
BOBBIE CHASE · EDITOR
BOB HARRAS · EDITOR IN CHIEF

Still... hate...

IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED, HOWEVER...

...THAT THE GREEKS WERE NOT THE ONLY ONES WITH ASSORTED MYTHS.

FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WERE THE NORSEMEN... RUGGED, BEARDED MEN WHO TROD FROZEN WASTES...

...AND SPOKE IN HUSHED WHISPERS OF ASGARDIANS AND FROST GIANTS...

...AND TROLLS.

FLAGPOLE, ARIZONA... ONE MILE SOUTH OF THE GRAND CANYON. JUST AFTER TEN A.M. ON A TYPICALLY WARM MORNING.

GENERAL STORE

THE CITIZENRY DOESN'T HABITUALLY ASSEMBLE IN THE STREET.

WELCOME TO FLAGPOLE

THAT IS BECAUSE THE WARMTH IS THE ONLY THING TYPICAL ABOUT THE MORNING.

THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ANY SIGN OF *DESTRUCTION* YET. THE CROWD IS NERVOUS, BUT NOT PANICKING.

YOU *GETTING* ALL THIS, ST. LAWRENCE?

GRAND CANYON ICE CREAM SHOPPE

ROGER THAT, GENERAL ROSS. BUT I MUST ONCE AGAIN REGISTER MY *PROTEST* ON THIS.

YOU ARE ENTERING A SITUATION WHICH IS--

--NO DIFFERENT THAN SITUATIONS I WAS ENTERING WHILE YOU WERE STILL IN *KNEE PANTS*, YOUNG LADY.

SO *EASE OFF*, COLONEL, PREPARE TO DO *YOUR* JOB...

...AND KINDLY ALLOW ME TO DO MINE. ROSS OUT.

"KNEE PANTS?"

JEEZ.

ADAM & MIKE'S DINER

DIABLO

HE'S OVER IN THE CAFE, GENERAL! BOLD AS BRASS! WAITRESS RECOGNIZED HIM, ASKED IF HE WAS HIM, AND HE SAID, "THAT'S ME!"

SO SHE CALLED ME! AND I CALLED YOU! I KNOW WHAT HE'S CAPABLE OF!

MOST OF MY MEN HAVE WIVES AND CHILDREN. I'M NOT GOING TO PUT THEM UP AGAINST THAT ...THAT...

JUST CALM DOWN, SON. YOU'RE BLATHERING. NOT EXACTLY BECOMING FOR A PEACE OFFICER.

KEEP YOUR MEN BACK, AND JUST LEAVE HIM TO ME.

DIABLO DINER
YES, WE'RE OPEN
DIABLO
GENERAL ROSS. MY HEAVENS.
I THOUGHT YOU'D GONE TO THAT BIG PENTAGON IN THE SKY.
IF YOU WERE DEAD EVERY TIME I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD, WE COULD FILL ARLINGTON CEMETERY WITH YOU.
VERY TRUE. BETTY MUST BE ECSTATIC.
SIT. IF YOU WISH. I'M ALMOST DONE. I'D HAVE THE WAITRESS BRING YOU SOMETHING...
...EXCEPT SHE APPEARS TO HAVE RUN SCREAMING OUT INTO THE STREET, ALONG WITH THE CUSTOMERS.
DOES THAT SURPRISE YOU?
NOT AT THESE PRICES, NO. THIS PLACE IS A TOURIST TRAP.
MENU

STILL PREFER CUBAN MANUDOS SUPREMOS, I SEE. *IMPRESSIVE* TASTE IN CIGARS... THOUGH I'VE ALWAYS BEEN MORE OF A *PIPE* MAN.

BUT THIS IS A *NO-SMOKING* SECTION, AND I KNOW YOU'RE A STICKLER FOR RULES.

I'M HERE TO BRING YOU IN.

AND I'M TO GO *COOPERATIVELY?*

THAT'S THE WISH OF YOUR GOVERNMENT ...AND *ME*. FAILING THAT--

INTERESTING SITUATION. YOU BELIEVE YOU'RE FAST ENOUGH TO *FIRE BEFORE* I TRANS-FORM.

I DON'T WANT TO *HAVE* TO.

NOW *THAT* I DOUBT.

YOU'RE MY DAUGHTER'S *HUSBAND.*

THAT... MEANS SOME-THING TO *ME*...

...BECAUSE IT MEANS SOMETHING TO *HER.*

I HAVE A *DUTY* TO HER... BUT *ALSO* TO THE GOVERNMENT.

DON'T MAKE ME *CHOOSE* BETWEEN THE TWO.

WAIT A MINUTE...

...DO YOU FEEL SOME...

...SOME KIND OF... RUMBLING?

APOCALYPSE

HUUUULLLKKK...

FOR YEARS ...YOU HAVE COME...TO ME...

NOW I COME...TO YOU!

GREAT. I'M GONE FOR MONTHS, SHUNTED TO ANOTHER UNIVERSE WHILE TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM APOCALYPSE ...AND I COME BACK HERE AND IT'S JUST AS I LEFT IT.

WHAT IS?

DIABLO DINER MENU

THIS! THIS... INSANITY I CALL A LIFE!

I SENSED YOU WERE HERE, BRUCE. WE ARE LINKED, YOU AND I. LINKED FOR ALL TIME. AND I...

BAR & GRILL

DINER

ROSS! THUNDERBOLT HIMSELF! AFTER ALL THESE YEARS. WHAT A... PLEASURE THIS IS GOING TO BE!

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU KNOW ME... BUT DON'T THINK SOME TWO-BIT ARMOR IS GOING TO SCARE ME! I'VE HAD EXPERTS TRY TO SCARE ME!

BLAM BLAM BLAM

SPEAKING AS ONE OF THOSE "EXPERTS," I'D LIKE TO GO ON RECORD BY SAYING THAT "TWO-BIT ARMOR" MAKES ME EXTREMELY NERVOUS.

LET ME CLARIFY A FEW THINGS FOR YOU, ROSS.

I'M NOT A MERE MAN-MONSTER FOR YOU TO HOUND. I WAS CREATED BY ODIN HIMSELF!

I WAS DESIGNED TO BE THE ULTIMATE WEAPON.

I HAVE FOUGHT GODS! I AM THE DESTROYER!

AND YOU ARE... TO BE DESTROYED.

JUST STAY DOWN, GENERAL.

THE DEVIL I WILL, BANNER! I'VE NEVER JUST SAT BACK AND LET ANY BEHEMOTH PUSH ME AROUND ...AS YOU WELL KNOW.

SO GET YOUR HAND OFF ME SO I CAN GET A CLEAR SHOT AT...

MENU

DINER

...AT...

I KNOW YOU...FROM SOMEWHERE...

KNOW YOU ENOUGH... TO KNOW...

I DON'T... LIKE YOU...

YES, WE'RE OPEN

NOT AT ALL!

THIS IS A NEW LOW FOR YOU, HULK. PROTECTING ROSS, OF ALL PEOPLE! WHY?

YOU KILL HIM... THEY BLAME ME. AND I'M TIRED OF BEING EVERYBODY'S FALL GUY.

IT'S A SHAME YOU FEEL THAT WAY, HULK, BECAUSE I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT, IF YOU MATCH STRENGTH WITH THE DESTROYER...

...YOU WILL MOST DEFINITELY BE TAKING...

NO PARKING

...A FALL!

FLAGPOLE BANK

LET ME GO! YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH!

AND YOU HAVE EVEN LESS!

CANYON TOURS

SO MUCH OF MY LIFE'S DIFFICULTIES CAN BE LAID AT YOUR DOORSTEP, ROSS. YOURS, OR YOUR ILK.

YOU DESERVE TO SUFFER THE FULL POWER OF THE DESTROYER. A CATASTROPHIC FORCE CAPABLE OF...

YOU NEVER SHUT UP!

WHERE DID THAT... COME FROM?

UP HERE.

EH?

THWA

YOU SEE THOSE TROLLS, HULK? REFUGEES FROM ASGARD, AND MY SERVANTS. THEY CAN EASILY ENOUGH DISPENSE WITH ROSS...

...WHILE MY DISINTEGRATION BLAST DIS-PATCHES YOU!

GET OFF ME!

WHATEVER YOU ARE, YOU *STINK* TO HIGH HEAVEN!

FEEL THAT *CRACKING* WITHIN YOU, HULK? THOSE ARE YOUR *RIBS.*

I'M GOING TO COUNT OUT *EACH ONE* AS I *BREAK* IT.

AND THEN WE'LL SEE HOW MANY *OTHER* BONES I GO THROUGH BEFORE I BECOME *BORED!*

THE BLUSTER, THE BRAGGING... NONE OF IT REGISTERS AS ALARM FOR THE HULK. HE'S HEARD IT ALL BEFORE.

AND THE HULK... NEEDING A LONG-RANGE WEAPON ...SEIZES THE ONE THAT IS HANDIEST.

GORFINKLE

MEATS

FLAGPOLE POST

THE DESTROYER HIMSELF.

BORED YET?

WHAT DOES REGISTER IS ROSS'S IMMINENT DEMISE, REFLECTED IN THE HIGHLY-POLISHED ARMOR.

BLAKOW

CAIRO, EGYPT...

THIS IS ALL MY FAULT.

I...I SHOULD HAVE *STOPPED* HIM FROM GOING SOMEHOW. WITH THE SHOW ON HIATUS, WE HAD SOME TIME TO OURSELVES, AND I...

I SHOULD HAVE INSISTED WE GO AWAY *TOGETHER*, BUT HE SAID THERE WAS SOME SORT OF *EMERGENCY*, AND I DIDN'T WANT TO BE *CLINGY*.

HONEY, YOU CAN'T BEAT YOURSELF *UP* OVER THIS. YOU JUST HAVE TO *BELIEVE*, THAT'S ALL.

HAVE *FAITH* THAT IT'S ALL GOING TO--

Unhhh...

DID YOU HEAR--?

I THINK HE...

HE'S *AWAKE!* HOW LONG HAS HE BEEN--?

HONEY, CAN YOU *HEAR* ME?

Could you... wipe my FACE? Got TEARS on it...

So... WASSUP? Am I gonna be... OKAY?

Y-YES, HONEY. YOU'RE... GOING TO BE JUST FINE.

RICK... DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT *HAPPENED?* *ANY* OF WHAT HAPPENED?

I... I remember ...there was...

No... I DON'T. But I WILL... sooner or later...

THE FIGHT HAS CONTINUED FOR SOME MINUTES, AND CARRIED THEM TO THE EDGE OF THE GRAND CANYON. WITH EACH PASSING MOMENT, THE HULK'S CONFIDENCE AND STRENGTH HAVE GROWN WITH HIS ANGER.

AND THEN, JUST LIKE THAT...

ARRGH HHHHH!

IDIOT.

DID YOU REALLY THINK YOU WERE STANDING UP TO ME? TRADING BLOWS WITH ME?

I WAS DESIGNED TO SLAY GODS!

YOU

HAVE

NO

CHANCE!

GET *UP*, HULK. I WANT MY FOLLOWERS TO SEE ME OBLITERATE A *WORTHY* FOE. DON'T DIE ON YOUR *KNEES*.

GET TO YOUR FEET AND DIE LIKE A *MAN*.

OH...BUT I *FORGOT*. THAT WOULD BE AN *UNPLEASANT* IMAGE FOR US, WOULDN'T IT?

"US?!"

THE HULK DOES NOT KNOW OR UNDERSTAND THAT THE DESTROYER IS ALWAYS PROPELLED BY A LIVING SPIRIT.

ON A CONSCIOUS LEVEL, HE DOESN'T GRASP THAT THIS TIME THE DESTROYER IS INHABITED BY THE *MAESTRO*.

BUT ON A **SUBCONSCIOUS** LEVEL...HE UNDERSTANDS IT **PERFECTLY**. IT FILLS HIM WITH A RAGE THAT IS BOTH **COLD** AND **BURNING**.

THEN THE DESTROYER'S FOOT TOUCHES THE BLOOD OF THE **HULK**...

...AND THE HULK SUDDENLY FEELS A **CONNECTION**, LIKE A **CIRCUIT** BEING COMPLETED.

ALONG THAT CIRCUIT, THE HULK'S SUBCONSCIOUS MIND **HOWLS** FORWARD AS THE DESTROYER ARMOR--NOW HAVING IDENTIFIED THE HULK AND MAESTRO AS THE **SAME** ENTITY--DRAWS THE HULK'S ANIMUS INTO THE ARMOR AS WELL.

GET... OUT!

YOU CAN'T... DO THIS--! I'LL...

I AM ...THE MAESTRO ...I'LL...MY STRENGTH IS...

...SUPREME ...THIS IS MY MOMENT... OF TRIUMPH...NOT YOURS... MINE! MINE!

STILL... DESTROY YOU...

BUILD UP THE POWER... AGAIN ...DEMOLECULARIZE... STILL...

...DESTROY YOUR BODY... KILL YOU... BE RID OF YOU FOR...

OH, NO... YOU DON'T!

NOT THIS TIME!

AND JUST AS THE DESTROYER'S DESTRUCTIVE POWER IS RELEASED...

...THE HULK SLAMS THE VISOR SHUT...

... AND A FORCE THAT CANNOT BE STOPPED BY ANYTHING ON EARTH... IS DRIVEN BACK INTO THE DESTROYER HIMSELF.

THE CONCUSSIVE FORCE BLOWS APART THE ENTIRE SECTION OF THE CANYON UPON WHICH HE'D BEEN STANDING...

...SENDING THE DESTROYER AND HALF A TON OF RUBBLE PLUMMETING TOWARDS THE TROLLS AND THE MAESTRO'S BODY.

THAT'S NOT NEARLY AS GREAT A PROBLEM, HOWEVER...

...AS THE TWO-TON AVALANCHE WHICH FOLLOWS **SECONDS** LATER, ENSURING THAT NOTHING IS LEFT **MOVING** AT THE CANYON'S BOTTOM.

WELL, WELL, DOCTOR... HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN SITTING THERE?

I'M... NOT ENTIRELY SURE.

WELL, I WOULDN'T SUGGEST TRYING...

...A TRANS-FORMATION.

BECAUSE AT THE FIRST HINT OF GREEN, THERE'LL BE MORE BULLETS IN YOU THAN IN A JOHN WOO FILM FESTIVAL.

RIFLES UP. HE'S MINE.

CAREFUL, GENERAL.

THERE IS A LONG MOMENT OF SILENCE. AND THEN ROSS REACHES INTO HIS UNIFORM JACKET, AND CARY ST. LAWRENCE THINKS...

"...GOOD LORD... HE'S GOING TO SHOOT HIM. HE'S FINALLY GOT HIM COLD, AND NOW HE'S GOING TO PUT HIM DOWN."

HMMF. MISTAKING AN UPPMANN FOR A MANUOO.

SHOULD'VE EXPECTED THAT FROM A PIPE MAN.

COMING NEXT ISSUE: RECONCILIATIONS

CAPTAIN MARVEL

TIME FLIES PART I of IV

MARVEL

MARVEL PG 27

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THE PLANET VARGAS, SOMEWHERE IN THE TAU CETI SYSTEM.

SO THE FELLOW TURNS AND HE SAYS, "EXCUSE ME...THAT'S NOT MY LEG! THAT'S MY AIRHOSE!"

HEEEHEEE HEEE!

NOT MY LEG, MY AIRHOSE! DO YOU GET THE JOKE?

YES, OH YES, WE *GET* IT! IT'S DELIGHTFUL, EROS!

MMMMM... ERRRROS!

GIRLS, GIRLS, PLEASE, REMEMBER... IT'S "*STARFOX*." I HAVEN'T GONE BY "*EROS*" FOR QUITE A WHILE.

AS FOR THE JOKE, WELL... THE TRUE JOKE IS THAT NOT ONLY IS IT *NOT* FUNNY...

...IT DOESN'T EVEN MAKE ANY *SENSE*.

I WAS JUST CURIOUS TO SEE IF YOU WOULD LAUGH AT *ANYTHING* I SAID.

YES, MY POINT *EXACTLY*.

AH WELL. WORRYING IS FOR, *UHM*... WORRIERS.

COME, DOMINIKA, MY SWEET. SHALL WE CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION... UPSTAIRS? IN PRIVATE?

ANYTHING YOU *SAY*, STARFOX.

MMMMMMM... STAAAARFOX...

READY FOR AN EVENING OF JOY, MY DEAR?

ABSOLUTELY, STARFOX.

TELL ME, LOVE CUP...DO YOU HAVE A MIND OF YOUR OWN?

IF YOU *WANT* ME TO, STARFOX.

THAT'S MY GIRL.

I'M JUST GOING TO TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO FRESHEN UP, ALL RIGHT?

TAKE AS MANY AS YOU WISH. YOU'RE WORTH WAITING FOR.

AND BY *STARTLING* COINCIDENCE, SO AM *I*.

KNOK KNOK

YES? CAN I HELP Y--?

TIME FLIES

He is **Genis**, son of the legendary intergalactic hero Mar-Vell! Linked by destiny to professional super hero sidekick **Rick Jones** through the atom-exchanging nega-bands, he is driven by cosmic awareness to seek out and eliminate those forces which threaten the universe!

Stan Lee Presents:

CAPTAIN MARVEL

:GKHHHH:

PART 1-OUTFOXED

Peter David writer ChrisCross pencils Anibal Rodriguez inks Chris Sotomayor colors
RS & Comicraft's Wes Abbott letters Sumerak n' Youngquist assistant editors
Tom Brevoort editor Joe Quesada editor in chief Bill Jemas president

-:GKKFSFKK:-

IMPRESSIVE. IF NOT FOR THE STRENGTH IN YOUR TITAN-BORN BODY, YOU'D BE DECAPITATED BY NOW.

WUUMF

WUUMF

IN A M!!!!NUTE!

MY MY, YOU *ARE* ANXIOUS, AREN'T YOU?

-:GKHHHHH:-

YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO DIE NOW, DON'T YOU, STARFOX OF TITAN?

NO, NO... THIS IS ACTUALLY JUST THE BEGINNING.

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. THE NAME IS...

...THANATOS.

AND BY THE WAY... ALL EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY...

...I'M REALLY A *HUGE* FAN OF YOURS.

STARFOX... I'M READY FOR YOUR --

I *DESPISE* INTERRUPTIONS.

EEEEEE

AAAARGHH!

THWUNK

NOW THEN, STARFOX... LET US *TALK* ABOUT THINGS. ABOUT BIRDS AND BEES AND EARTH, AND THE INDIVIDUAL CALLED...

RICK?

RICK, HONEY... WHAT'RE YOU *DOING* UP HERE ON THE ROOF? IT'S FIVE-THIRTY IN THE MORNING!

JUST ENJOYING THE NEW DAY, MAR'.

JUST GROOVIN' ON TAKING IT IN WITH YOUNG EYES. WITH TWO ARMS.

AND WITH MY WIFE, WITH WHOM I HAD THE MOST INCREDIBLE NIGHT EVER. *EVER.*

THEY CALL HULK INCREDIBLE AND SPIDER-MAN AMAZING, BUT THEY GOT NOTHING ON YOU.

RIIIIIIICK...

C'MON, HONEY, NO ONE IN L.A. IS EVEN AWAKE YET. COME BACK TO BED...

WHY WAIT TO GET ALL THE WAY BACK DOWN TO BED?

WHAT DO YOU --?

MMMMMM...

RICK... RICK, SOMEONE WILL SEE...

NO ONE'S AWAKE.

WH-WHAT ABOUT CAPTAIN MARVEL... IN THE MICROVERSE? YOU'RE... JOINED TO HIM. HE SEES WHAT YOU SEE... IS... IS *HE* WATCHING US?

NAH. HE'S ASLEEP, TOO.

ARE YOU SURE?

SURE I'M SURE.

OH GOD... RICK... THAT FEELS SO GOOD...

ARE YOU *SURE* CAPTAIN MARVEL ISN'T...

ONE HUNDRED PERCENT.

GOLLLDDDD!

SO COOOLLLDDDD!

OHHHH, GROZIT YES! FREEZING COLD SHOWER!

COLD COLD COLD COLD...

WHOOAAA! COLD COLD COLD NOT WATCHING NOT WATCHING COLD COLD COLD

HOLLLLYY MOTHER OF SATURN--!!

SIZZ OOSH

BLOOP BLOOP

BLOOP BLOOP

WHAT *LITTLE* CHARM THERE WAS IN SHARING RICK JONES' LIFE IS *LONG* GONE.

HE WAS EASIER TO TAKE WHEN HE WAS OLD AND ONE-ARMED AND JUST *COMPLAINED* ALL THE TIME.

THE REINVIGORATED RICK IS GOING TO MAKE MY HEAD EXPLODE.

FACE IT, MARV, YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS.

AND PARDON *ME* FOR HAVING A SEX LIFE. BESIDES, I THOUGHT YOU WERE *ASLEEP.*

THE HELL YOU *DID.*

NO, REALLY.

SURE, RICK. PUSH THE OTHER ONE WHY DON'T YOU.

DO YOU MEAN "PULL THE OTHER ONE"?

WHATEVER.

OH. WELL, I STILL THINK YOU'RE JEALOUS.

NOT OF YOU AND MARLO. I *WANT* YOU TO BE HAPPY. I'M JUST HONKY.

DO YOU MEAN "HORNY"?

WHATEVER.

THE FACT IS THAT I HAD A *VERY* ACTIVE, UHM...*SOCIAL* LIFE BEFORE ANY OF THIS. LOVERS. EVERYTHING.

YOU MEAN THAT, RICK?

OKAY, LOOK. HOW ABOUT WHEN THINGS SETTLE DOWN HERE, WE SWITCH OUT, AND YOU LOOK UP SOME OLD "*FRIENDS*"?

YOU SAW ME THROUGH A *MISERABLE* PERIOD, MARV. ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP, YOU GOT IT.

YOU DIDN'T TELL HIM.

AAAAAHHH!

YOU DIDN'T TELL HIM THAT HIS CRAZY MOTHER IS RUNNING AROUND, AND THAT SHE KILLED ME.

WHY SHOULD I GET HIM ALL *WORRIED?*

WHY? WELL, HOW ABOUT BECAUSE HIS CRAZY MOTHER IS RUNNING AROUND AND SHE KILLED ME.

SHE'S WAY THE HELL OUT IN ARIZONA; THE POLICE HAVE A DRAGNET OUT FOR HER. WITH ANY LUCK, HE'LL NEVER KNOW.

AND HE'LL NEVER KNOW I *DIED!*

HE *KNOWS* YOU DIED. HE JUST WON'T KNOW YOU DIED AGAIN.

BECAUSE... WHAT? IT'S NOT *IMPORTANT?*

YES, LORRAINE, IT'S IMPORTANT. BUT RICK'S BEEN THROUGH A *LOT,* AND I WANT HIM TO HAVE SOME TIME WHEN HE'S NOT *WORRYING* ABOUT SOMETHING! TO ME, THAT'S *MORE* IMPORTANT!

RASSUM FRASSUM

WHAT?

I SAID I'M GONNA TELL HIM YOU FAKED IT.

I *DID NOT!*

EVERY TIME.

YOU WERE *WATCHING?!*

I'M A GHOST. WHAT *ELSE* DO I HAVE TO DO WITH MY EVENING?

WELL, I DIDN'T -- AND BESIDES, YOU CAN'T TELL HIM *ANYTHING*. HE CAN'T SEE OR HEAR YOU.

I'LL *FIND* A WAY.

GOD, I WISH YOU'D BOTHER SOMEONE ELSE FOR HALF A MINUTE!

MARLO *FAKED* IT, EVERY TIME.

HUH?!

BBLLHHRRGG!

LORRAINE?!
RICK?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
WHAT AM I *DOING* HERE? I'M TALKING TO YOU!
HOW AM I TALKING TO YOU?!
WELL, *THIS* IS WEIRD! AND WHAT DO YOU MEAN SHE FAKED IT?
NEVER MIND THAT! WE GOTTA FIGURE THIS OUT!
I THOUGHT YOU *DIED!*
I DID! BUT THEN I WAS *ALIVE* AGAIN! BUT I GOT KILLED AGAIN!
YOU GOT *KILLED AGAIN?* WHAT ARE YOU, LIKE THAT LITTLE CARTOON KID WHO DIES EVERY WEEK?
MARLO! GET *OUT* OF THERE! YOU'RE NOT GONNA *BELIEVE* THIS!
LORRAINE IS HERE!
HUH?! WHAT--!
SHE'S *RIGHT* OVER--
WHA--? SHE'S GONE!
NO, I'M *NOT!*
I SWEAR TO YOU, MAR', LIKE THIRTY SECONDS AGO I WAS DRINKING COFFEE, THEN POOF, SHE'S YELLING AT ME! BUT NOW SHE'S *VANISHED!*
I'M STANDING RIGHT *HERE*, YOU *NITWIT!*
YOU'RE UNDER A STRAIN, *RICK.* LET'S *GO.*
UH... OKAY.
NYAAAAARRHH!

Y'KNOW, MAR'... I'VE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT THE WHOLE THING ABOUT HOW I WAS RESTORED. Y'KNOW WHAT I THINK?

RICK, AS LONG AS YOU'RE NOT IMAGINING YOU SEE LORRAINE, I'LL LISTEN TO ANYTHING YOU WANT TO SAY.

I THINK I HAD A RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

I MEAN... I'VE SEEN *A LOTTA* STUFF. BUT THE *BIG GUY?* *NADA.*

WAY I FIGURED IT, THE ONLY PROOF OF HIS EXISTENCE IS MY BEING ENDLESSLY *PUNISHED* FOR HEADING INTO THE GAMMA BOMB TESTING GROUND YEARS AGO.

AND, Y'KNOW... HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO *WORSHIP* SOMEONE WHO KEEPS BEATING ME UP FOR ONE MISTAKE I MADE AS A KID?

BUT NOW I FIGURE... MY BEING RESTORED SO MIRACULOUSLY-- IT'S PROOF HE'S *FORGIVEN* ME. LET ME OFF THE HOOK, FINALLY. I'M SQUARED IN THE BIG BOOK.

RICK, WE'VE BEEN *OVER* THIS. I TOLD YOU, THE INTELLIGENCE SUPREME'S CURE MUST HAVE WORKED IT WAS JUST A *DELAYED* EFFECT, THAT'S ALL.

NO, MARV. NO. IT... FELT DIFFERENT.

IN YOUR *MIND*, PERHAPS.

WHAT'S CAPTAIN MARVEL SAYING?

THAT THE *INTELLIGENCE SUPREME* OF THE KREE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR IT, WHEN HE TRIED TO CURE ME.

WELL... MAYBE YOU'RE BOTH RIGHT. MAYBE THIS KREE GUY WAS DIVINELY INSPIRED.

THE IMPORTANT THING IS, YOU'RE BACK, AND YOU'RE HEALTHY, AND THINGS ARE GOOD BETWEEN US.

UH, MAR'... THERE'S SOMETHING I GOTTA TELL YOU.

UH-OH.

Melrose Ave

WHEN I WAS IN THE MICROVERSE, THIS BUNCH OF GORGEOUS GIRLS WERE, WELL... THROWING THEMSELVES AT ME. AND I, UH...

YOU *CHEATED* ON ME?

WELL, *NO* -- BUT NOT FOR LACK OF TRYING. BUT I *SHOULDN'T* HAVE TRIED. IT WAS WRONG. AND... AND I'M SORRY. IT'S JUST THAT --

RICK, IT'S OKAY. *REALLY.* WHILE YOU WERE OLD, IT WAS A STRESSFUL TIME. WE ALL FACE TEMPTATIONS -- AND SOMETIMES, WE SLIP. YOU... ME. WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS *FORGIVENESS.*

WOW. THAT'S... THAT'S GREAT OF YOU TO SAY, MAR, AND I --

WAIT! ARE YOU SAYING -- *YOU* WERE WITH SOME GUYS WHILE I WAS OLD...?!

UH-HUH. ABOUT TWO DOZEN.

TWO DOZEN?!

YUP. AND BELIEVE ME...

...THEY DON'T CALL THEM THE OAKLAND *ATHLETICS* FOR *NOTHING.*

BWAAA

SHE GOT YOU GOOD THAT TIME, RICK

AWWW, SHUT UP, MARV.

OH, YOU'RE A *RIOT*, MARLO.

HA!

HEY, AL...I KNOW IT'S NOT FOR THE *PUBLIC*, BUT...

SPAWN

POTTY EMERGENCY?

UH-HUH.

SURE, GO AHEAD. IN THE BACK. OH, IF WE'RE OUTTA TP, WE GOT EXTRA COPIES OF *"SPAWN #1."*

THANKS, MAN.

HEY, R.J. HEY, BOSS.

YOU'RE LOOKING CHUMMY. YOU GUYS OFFICIALLY RECONCILED?

SURE *LOOKS* THAT WAY, ALICE...

RICK!

OH, CRIPES, RIGHT, I'M NOT *EVER* SUPPOSED TO SAY HIS REAL NA--

RICK!

RJ., FOR THE LUVVA GOD--!

I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY! MAYBE NOBODY HEARD M--!

ALICE?!

WELL, SO MUCH FOR *THIS* JOB.

AL, I AM *SO* SORRY...

REALLY, I--

DON'T SAY ANYTHING.

I MEAN IT, R.J. NOT A WORD.

DUDE! SOME GUY IS HOGGING THE CAN!

WHAT?

SOME GUY IN A WEIRD-ASS OUTFIT. HE'S JUST *SITTIN'* THERE, LID DOWN, AND HE SAID HE'S LEAKIN' SOMETHING. SO I TELL HIM, DUDE, IF YOU'RE LEAKIN' STUFF, YOU DON'T SIT ON TOP OF THE LID. AND HE SAYS HE'S *"FLUXED."* LEAST, I *THINK* THAT'S WHAT HE SAID. HE MIGHT'VE MEANT--

NEVER MIND. I'M ON IT.

YEAH, GOOD, GO DO DAMAGE SOMEWHERE *ELSE.*

IT'S TOO BAD MOONDRAGON'S OFF ON SOME MISSION. RICK COULD REALLY USE SOMEONE TO COVER HIS BACK..

WHAT AM I TALKING ABOUT? HE'S GOT *CAPTAIN MARVEL,* EVER VIGILANT, WATCHING OVER HIM!

ZZWWN

WHAT IN THE --?

STARFOX?!

AH... RICK JONES, CORRECT?

YOU'RE WEARING YOUR HAIR DIFFERENTLY. IT LOOKS GOOD ON YOU.

I DON'T *BELIEVE* IT.

ALL RIGHT, FAIR ENOUGH. ACTUALLY, IT'S A TERRIBLY *UNFLATTERING* HAIRCUT. I WAS JUST BEING POLITE.

NO, I MEAN I DON'T BELIEVE THAT SUDDENLY YOU SHOW UP OUTTA NOWHERE, SITTING IN THE JOHN IN A COMIC BOOK STORE! IT MAKES NO SEN--

WAIT... YOU DON'T THINK THIS CUT LOOKS GOOD?

OKAY, SO WHAT'S GOING ON?

IT'S STARFOX. HE'S A SUPERHUMAN FROM THE SATURN MOON OF TITAN, AND HE DOESN'T LIKE MY HAIR.

HE CAME ALL THE WAY FROM *SATURN* JUST TO DISS YOUR HAIR?

NO, THAT'S JUST ONE OF THE PERKS. *LISTEN*, I NEED HELP.

STARFOX, THIS IS MARLO, MY WIFE. MARLO, STARFOX.

DO YOU LIKE *MY* HAIR?

IT'S STUNNING.

REALLY?

NO.

RICK, I HAVE A BIT OF A PROBLEM. FOR REASONS TOO BIZARRE TO GO INTO, I'M LEAKING A SORT OF TEMPORAL ENERGY, SENDING ME INTO FLUX. THIS BAND AROUND MY THROAT IS CONTROLLING IT SOMEWHAT... BUT IT'S STARTING TO *LOSE* ITS EFFECTIVENESS.

I WAS HOPING THAT GENIS -- OR YOU, OR BOTH -- COULD USE YOUR NEGA-BANDS TO REGULATE IT SOMEHOW, PERHAPS EVEN DRAIN IT OFF.

OTHERWISE, SOME CATASTROPHIC EFFECTS ON TIME AND SPACE WILL CONTINUE UNABATED.

"CATASTROPHIC" MEANING--?

LOOK?

DO I *REALLY* WANT TO?

...YOUR AVERAGE PLUMBING FIXTURES DON'T USUALLY *FEATURE* A TEMPORAL VORTEX.

WOW. THIS IS LIKE THOSE DREAMS I HAD.

WHAT DREAMS?

WHOA.

OKAY... I'LL ADMIT IT...

WELL, ONE TIME, I RENTED *"TRAINSPOTTING"* AND *"PHANTOM MENACE"*, AND WATCHED THEM BACK-TO-BACK. FOR A *WEEK*, I KEPT DREAMING ABOUT EWAN McGREGOR CLIMBING INTO A TOILET AND SWIMMING TO AN UNDER-WATER CITY WITH JAR JAR BINKS.

WHAT THE HECK IS IT DOING THERE?

I'VE MANAGED TO CHANNEL THE TEMPORAL FLUX STRAIGHT INTO THIS CONTAINER... BUT IT ISN'T STABLE. NOR HAVE I ANY IDEA HOW TO GET RID OF IT...

WELL, THERE'S THE *OBVIOUS.*

WHAT *"OBVIOUS"* DO YOU MEA---?

FLOOOSH

NO! WAIT --!!

OH, WONDERFUL!!

MARLO! GET BACK!!

BUT --!

BACK! *NOW!* I NEED CHANGING ROOM!!

MARV! TIME TO BANG THOSE BANDS!

BAKOOM

WHAT? WHAT :YAAWWWWN: IS IT, RICK --?

GROZIT! NOW WHAT?!!

GENIS! DO SOMETHING! BEFORE IT'S --!

FLOOOOF

OKAY. THAT WAS DIFFERENT.

H-AAAAAHHH--!

OOOOFF!

UNHHH!

MORE GUYS IN COSTUMES! THEY MUST BE ACCOMPLICES OF HIS!

OF WHOSE?!?

OF MINE.

SORRY, BOYS. I'D VOUCH FOR YOU, TELL THEM I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU...

...BUT HERE IN 2099, THE WORD OF SPIDER-MAN DOESN'T MEAN A WHOLE SHOCKIN' LOT.

MARVEL

MARVEL PG 28

CAPTAIN MARVEL

TIME FLIES PART II of IV

jose

BRRR

MEANWHILE... LESS THAN A CENTURY AWAY, AT THE CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS OF ALCHEMAX.

MR. STONE! THANKS FOR COMING DOWN SO QUICKLY. I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO *SEE* THIS.

THIS HAD BETTER BE GOOD, BOONE.

IT IS, MR. STONE. IT INVOLVES SOMETHING WE PULLED OUT OF VIRTUAL UNREALITY...

VIRTUAL UNREALITY! I THOUGHT I ORDERED THAT PROJECT *SHUT DOWN!*

IT'S A LARGE PIECE OF METAL. I'M *DAZZLED.*

SIR... THIS MAY CHANGE YOUR MIND. WE'VE PULLED ANOTHER ARTIFACT OUT OF VIRTUAL UNREALITY.

THE LAST TIME YOU MUCKED WITH THAT INTERDIMENSIONAL NONSENSE, I NEARLY WOUND UP BEING KILLED BY THAT *"THANATOS"* CREATURE. HE TOOK AN *UNDUE* INTEREST IN IT.

THAT'S TRUE, SIR, BUT WE WERE ABLE TO TRAP HIM *IN* THERE...

WE TRAPPED SPIDER-MAN, AS WELL, BUT HE GOT OUT. IF HE COULD, SO COULD THANATOS. LIFE'S TOO SHORT, BOONE, TO RISK MAKING IT *SHORTER.*

I'M HEADING RIGHT BACK TO THE CEO AND SAYING, *"JORDAN BOONE FOUND US A DAZZLING PIECE OF METAL."* STARK-FUJIKAWA DOESN'T HAVE A PIECE OF METAL. ONLY *WE* DO. WE'RE A MUCH BETTER COMPANY.

WH-WHAT'S IT DOING, BOONE?

THAT'S JUST THE POINT, SIR. IT'S REACTING.

THAT'S NICE. TO *WHAT?* WHAT THE SHOCK *IS* THAT THING?

AS NEAR AS WE CAN TELL FROM STUDYING THE CIRCUITRY OF IT... IT'S A TIME PLATFORM.

TIME AS IN... TIME TRAVEL?

YES, SIR.

THAT'S PREPOSTEROUS, BOONE.

AS WAS PENICILLIN AT ONE TIME, SIR, OR THE NOTION OF HUMAN FLIGHT.

THERE'S *NO* MISTAKE. IT'S A TIME MACHINE, POWERED BY WHAT I CAN ONLY REFER TO AS CHRONOPARTICLES. WE DID A MOLECULAR SCAN AND FOUND SOME STILL ADHERING TO ITS FUEL MATRIX.

CAN IT BE *ACTIVATED?* AND WHY IS IT GLOWING?

IT LACKS SUFFICIENT PARTICLES FOR FULL ACTIVATION. AS TO THE LATTER QUESTION...

...IT WASN'T GLOWING WHEN WE FIRST RETRIEVED IT SOME DAYS AGO OUT OF V.U. SPACE. ITS CURRENT STATUS IS A RECENT DEVELOPMENT. WE THINK IT'S RESPONDING TO A NEWLY DISCOVERED SOURCE OF CHRONOPARTICLES.

AND WHERE MIGHT THAT BE?

AS NEAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE...

...RIGHT THERE.

THERE? ON THE UPPER WEST SIDE, A MILE IN THE AIR? WHAT'S *OVER* THERE GIVING OFF STRANGE TIME PARTICLES?

TIME FLIES

SURRENDER! SURRENDER IN THE NAME OF THE PUBLIC EYE!

GENIS! A LITTLE *HELP* HERE!

HMM?

PART 2: So Tonight We're Gonna Party Like it's 2099

CAPTAIN MARVEL

He is **Genis**, son of the legendary intergalactic hero Mar-Vell! Linked by destiny to professional super hero sidekick **Rick Jones** through the atom-exchanging nega-bands, he is driven by cosmic awareness to seek out and eliminate those forces which threaten the universe!
Stan Lee Presents:

Peter David writer **Chris Batista** pencils **Rich Perotta** inks **Chris Sotomayor** colors
RS & Comicraft's Wes Abbott letters **Sumerak 'n' Youngquist** assistant editors
Tom Brevoort editor **Joe Quesada** editor in chief **Bill Jemas** president

OH. SORRY. HOLD ON.

KWAAAM

WHOA...

FRIENDS OF YOURS?

IF THEY WERE, I WOULDN'T ADMIT TO IT.

THANKS FOR THE HELP. SEE YOU.

DON'T LET 'IM GO, MARV!

STAY RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE!

YOU KNOW, ON *SECOND* THOUGHT...

...I'LL JUST GO WHERE *YOU* ARE.

GENIS! I'M... I'M SUDDENLY NOT FEELING VERY... VERY...

...WELLLL...

...77777

I'M COMING, STARFOX!

YOU! IN THE BLACK AND RED! STAY PUT!

OOOOKAY.

HANG ON, STARFOX! I'M ALMOST...

...THERE?

WHAT IN THE PAMA IS GOING ON HERE?

RICK...? DO YOU SEE THAT...?

YEAH, MARV, I DO — BUT FOR ONCE, I'M AS *CLUELESS* AS YOU ARE!

WELL, *THAT'S* GOOD TO KN --

HEY! WAIT A MINUTE--!

I'LL WAIT, BUT I DON'T THINK *STARFOX* HAS THAT OPTION.

WHAT --?

OH. RIGHT.

STARFOX! STARFOX, IT'S ME!

I *KNOW* IT'S YOU, GENIS. WHO *ELSE* WOULD IT BE?

WHAT THE HELL IS HAPPENING? WHEN YOU WERE FALLING, I THOUGHT I SAW... I DON'T *KNOW* WHAT I SAW!

WAS IT A BARRAGE OF *IMAGES* FROM VARIOUS POSSIBLE FUTURES THROUGHOUT ALL REALITY?

HOW DID YOU KNOW --?

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

IT DOES MATTER, STARFOX, AND DON'T BE DISMISSIVE OF ME! I'M NOT A CHILD ANYMORE!

YOU NEVER *WERE* A CHILD. YOU'RE A GENETIC CONSTRUCT ARTIFICIALLY EXPEDITED TO YOUR PRESENT FORM, AND YOUR CHILDHOOD IS IMPLANTED MEMORIES.

ALL RIGHT, *FINE!* STARFOX, DON'T BE DISMISSIVE OF ME! I'M NOT A GENETICALLY CONSTRUCTED, ARTIFICIALLY EXPEDITED ADULT WITH IMPLANTED MEMORIES OF MY CHILDHOOD ANYMORE!

YES, YOU ARE.

ALL RIGHT, I *AM!* BUT YOU GET THE IDEA!

ACTUALLY, I'M *TOTALLY* LOST. WHAT WAS YOUR POINT AGAIN?

I --

NEVER MIND.

SPIDER-MAN! WE NEED A GUIDE TO WHEREVER WE ARE, AND YOU'RE--

-- ELECTED?

OH, PERFECT. HE'S GONE.

AND THIS SURPRISES YOU HOW?

IT'S MOVING, MR. STONE. THE CHRONOPARTICLE SOURCE IS MOVING.

NOTHING SURPRISES ME ANYMORE. I'M GOING FROM COSMICALLY AWARE TO COSMICALLY BLASÉ.

COME ON, LET'S MOVE.

ALL RIGHT, BOONE, YOU'VE CONVINCED ME THIS IS WORTH PURSUING. I'M GOING TO SCRAMBLE THE S.I.E.G.E. SQUAD...

I KNOW WHAT IT STANDS FOR, BOONE, I NAMED IT MYSELF. THE POINT IS--

THE SITUATIONAL EMERGENCY GEAR?

WHAT THE SHOCK--?!

UUHH!

MR. BOONE! MR. STONE! WE'RE GETTING SOME SORT OF MASSIVE ENERGY FEEDBACK!

THANK YOU FOR THAT BRILLIANT UPDATE, SAUNDERS! ANYTHING *ELSE* OBVIOUS YOU'D CARE TO COMMENT ON?

SHUT DOWN ALL THE RELAYS! HURRY! AND FOR GOD'S SAKE, START WITH THE VIRTUAL UNREALITY PORTAL BEFORE IT'S--

BOOM

YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE REALLY EXCEL AT BEING ONE STEP *BEHIND* ANY GIVEN EMERGENCY, *DON'T* YOU, BOONE?

GREETINGS, TYLER STONE, YOU FESTERING PILE OF STEAMING ENTRAILS! DID YOU THINK I'D *FORGOTTEN* ABOUT YOU?

HE TALKS LIKE ONE OF MY EX-WIVES.

WHICH ONE?

ANY ONE.

DID YOU TRULY THINK THAT YOU COULD IMPRISON THANATOS WITHIN THE AREA YOU CALL "VIRTUAL UNREALITY" AS EASILY AS ALL *THAT?*

YOU HAVE NO COMPREHENSION OF WHAT YOU'RE DEALING WITH.

OH, I THINK WE *DO.* WE'RE DEALING WITH A LOUDMOUTHED, BOMBASTIC FOOL WHO DERIVES DEMENTED PLEASURE FROM THREATENING THOSE HE SEES AS WEAKER. ISN'T THAT RIGHT, BOONE?

I.. I ACTUALLY DON'T KNOW *WHO* THIS GENTLEMAN IS, MR. THANATOS. REST ASSURED HIS OPINIONS DO NOT REPRESENT *ME,* OR THE OTHER EMPLOYEES OF --

QUIET.

YES, SIR.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, STONE, MY ATTACK EARLIER WAS MERELY TO GET YOUR ATTENTION.

WAS IT NOW.

YES. I WANTED ACCESS TO VIRTUAL UNREALITY... BUT ON MY OWN TERMS, SO THAT I COULD MEET THE GOALS I HAD *SET* FOR MYSELF.

THOSE GOALS *BEING* ---?

THE TIME DEVICE THAT YOU HAVE HERE IN THIS LAB...

...AND THE END OF CIVILIZATION AS WE KNOW IT.

WHILE, A HUNDRED YEARS EARLIER, IN THE MIDST OF CIVILIZATION AS WE KNOW IT...

SO WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED? HOW WAS IT THAT RICK WAS ABLE TO *SEE* ME FOR A BRIEF TIME?

IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY *SENSE.*

HEY THERE, ALICE.

OYYYYYY...

ONE MINUTE I WAS TALKING TO *MARLO*, AND THE NEXT I WAS TALKING TO RICK AND HE WAS --

WAIT. WAIT A SEC'. WHAT WAS IT MARLO SAID? SOMETHING LIKE...

..."I WISH YOU'D *BOTHER SOMEBODY ELSE FOR HALF A MINUTE.*" AND THEN, BAM! I'M BOTHERING RICK...

HELLO. IS *MARLO* HERE?

SHE'S IN THE RESTROOM.

AND HE WAS ABLE TO SEE ME... FOR *THIRTY SECONDS!* HALF A MINUTE!

DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG SHE'LL BE?

A WHILE, I THINK.

VERY WELL, I'LL WAI --

ON SECOND THOUGHT, I'LL COME *BACK.*

HOKEY-DOKE. CAN I TELL HER YOUR NAME?

OH, JUST SAY AN OLD FRIEND SHE'LL BE *DYING* TO SEE.

HI. I WANTED TO PICK UP THE ENTIRE RUN OF *"FANTASTIC FORCE."*

MY GOD, *WHY?*

MARLO! SAY YOU WISH I WAS ALIVE!

SAY THAT I *DID*. BUT WHAT WOULD BE THE POINT WHEN --

NO, NO, I MEAN SAY IT! SAY, "I WISH LORRAINE WAS ALIVE."

MY MOTHER ALWAYS SAYS, "IF WISHES WERE FISHES, THE WORLD WOULD BE AN OCEAN."

I *SO* DON'T GIVE A DAMN! JUST SAY IT!

OKAY, FINE. "I WISH LORRAINE WAS ALIVE." HAPPY?

NUTS! WELL, SO MUCH FOR *THAT* THEORY.

LORRAINE, I *REALLY* DON'T HAVE TIME FOR GAMES.

OKAY, OKAY.

BY THE WAY, HAS IT OCCURRED TO YOU THAT IF FOR SOME REASON THAT TOILET IS THE *ONLY* WAY IN OR OUT OF WHEREVER THEY'VE GONE --

-- YOU'RE SEALING OFF THEIR MEANS OF GETTING *BACK* HERE? JUST LIKE YOU TO HAVE A COUPLE OF SUPERTYPES DROWNING IN YOUR FLUSHER.

I HATE YOU.

DON'T *MENTION* IT.

SO ONE MINUTE YOU'RE DODGING A CHASE FROM A BUNCH OF *FLYBOYS*...

...AND THE NEXT YOU'RE BEING HELPED OUT BY SOME GUY WITH TIGHTS AND A STARRY FACE?

YOU GOT IT, GABE.

BUT WHERE'D HE COME FROM, MIGGY?

DON'T KNOW, LITTLE BROTHER -- AND MOREOVER, I DON'T *CARE*.

THOSE GUYS HAVE BAD NEWS WRITTEN ALL OVER THEM.

DO THEY REALLY, MIGUEL? WHAT FORM OF ENGLISH WAS IT --

NOT LITERALLY, LYLA.

I SEE. WELL, IF YOU WERE UNCLEAR ON THE SUBJECT, I COULD ALWAYS ASK THE INDIVIDUALS THEM-SELVES.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, LYLA? THERE'S NO --

OOOOHHH BOY...

LYLA... ARE WE GETTING COMPANY?

"COMPANY." DEFINITION ONE: AN ARRIVAL OF FRIENDS AND CONVIVIAL PARTY-GOERS. DEFINITION TWO: HOMICIDAL MANIACS LIKELY TO KILL MIGUEL AND/OR GABRIEL.

THE FORMER SEEMS UNLIKELY... THE LATTER, MORE SO.

KNOCK KNOCK

DON'T MIND US. WE LET OURSELVES IN.

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD THAT KIND OF TK SKILL, STARFOX.

MERELY THE SAME GRAVITATION MANIPULATION THAT ENABLES ME TO FLY, GENIS.

I PREFER "CAPTAIN MARVEL."

ODD... SO DID YOUR MOTHER.

NOW THEN... WHICH OF YOU IS SPIDER-MAN?

SPIDER-MAN? WHO'S -- *OHHHH!* RIGHT! MASKED CHAP. CRAWLS WALLS. DRESSES IN THAT RATHER *GARISH* ENSEMBLE, ISN'T THAT RIGHT, GASTON?

HUH...?

OH! OH, RIGHT! *TERRIBLY* GARISH! JUST... JUST GARISH!

YOU SEE?

NICE, TIGHT LITTLE *BUTT*, THOUGH.

WELL, OF COURSE HE -- *WHAT?*

CUT THE *COMEDY*, GENTLEMEN. THE PUPILLESS EYES AND STARFACE AREN'T JUST FOR SHOW.

THAT WEBBING THING ON HIS BACK PACKS SOME SORT OF ANTI-GRAV LIFT. HE LEFT A TRAIL OF IONIZED PARTICLES THAT WAS LIKE A HOMING BEACON FOR ME.

MARV, WHY ARE WE EVEN BOTHERING WITH THIS GUY?

BECAUSE STARFOX FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT...

YEAH, AS IF STARFOX HAS BEEN MISTER FORTHCOMING SINCE THIS LUNACY STARTED.

I'M MORE INTERESTED IN TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW I'M STILL COMMUNICATING WITH YOU, SINCE THIS LOOKS TO BE AN ALTERNATE DIMENSION AND OUR LINK HASN'T WORKED BEFORE IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES.

THERE'S MORE GOING ON HERE THAN MEETS THE EYE, MARV, AND WASTING TIME WITH THESE GUYS ISN'T GOING TO --

WE DON'T HAVE *TIME* FOR THIS DANCE!

YOU! ARE *YOU* HIM? TELL ME NOW!

STARFOX! EROS, WHAT ARE YOU --?

AARRRGHH!

TELL ME!

OKAY, THAT'S IT! YOU *WANT* SPIDER-MAN?!

BLEE AGHFF!

FWHHZZ

HIS WEBS! THEY'RE ORGANIC! THEY'RE *PART* OF HIM!

SPIDER-MAN WITH ORGANIC WEB-SHOOTERS! BOY, *THAT'S* SOMETHING YOU'LL NEVER SEE IN A MOVIE--

WELL? ARE YOU HAPPY? *ARE* YOU?

YOU'VE GOT SPIDER-MAN!

HIS PULSE AND RESPIRATION DO NOT ***DEFINITELY*** INDICATE A STATE OF EUPHORIA, MIGUEL. BEST-CASE OBSERVATION WOULD BE A 43-PERCENT CHANCE THAT HE IS HAPPY, FOLLOWED BY A 17-PERCENT CHANCE OF SLIGHT GIDDINESS, A 19-PERCENT CHANCE OF --

LYLA... WOULD YOU MIND GOING AWAY?

I AM A COMPUTER-GENERATED APARTMENT MONITOR, MIGUEL. *"MINDING"* THINGS IS ***BEYOND*** MY PROGRAMMING PARAMETERS.

GOOD. SO... GO.

I HAVE FRESH CRULLERS BAKING.

NOW.

WHO THE HELL WAS *THAT?*

NO ONE.

MMMMMFF!

LOOK, STARFACE, YOU SEEM TO BE THE MORE *SENSIBLE* OF... OF WHOEVER YOU TWO ARE, EVEN THOUGH YOU DISPLAY A DISTURBING TENDENCY TO TALK TO YOURSELF.

ACTUALLY, I'M TALKING TO --

ACTUALLY, I DON'T CARE. YOU OKAY, GABRI?

I THINK I HURT MY --

GREAT, GLAD TO *HEAR* IT.

DO YOU HAVE ANY CLUE WHERE YOU ARE?

YOU SAID SOMETHING ABOUT... 2099? BUT... BUT *WE'RE* FROM THE YEAR 2002, AS IMPOSSIBLE AS THAT SOUNDS...

YOU'RE TALKING TO A GUY WHO CLIMBS WALLS AND FIRES WEBBING FROM HIS ARMS. YOU'D BE *AMAZED* HOW MUCH SEEMS POSSIBLE TO ME THESE DAYS.

YOU'RE REMOVING THE WEBBING?

IS THAT GOING TO *HURT?*

THAT'S THE IDEA.

IF I DO IT RIGHT.

PERFECT.

FREE AT LAST

RRRIPP

HOW... DARE YOU! WHY, I SHOULD --!

YOU SHOULD BE HONEST, IS WHAT YOU "*SHOULD*" DO. HONEST WITH ME, AND HONEST WITH YOUR FRIEND -- WHO, I SUSPECT, HAS *NO* CLUE WHAT'S GOING ON.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

NOTHING! I WANT *NOTHING* FROM YOU!

LYLA! IS HE *LYING?*

GIVEN THAT I HAVEN'T YET ESTABLISHED A COMPLETE TRUTH BASELINE FOR HIM, MIGUEL, I CAN ONLY ESTIMATE THE CHANCES THAT HE'S LYING AT APPROXIMATELY 87-PERCENT, BASED UPON BUMPS IN BODILY--

THANKS. YOU CAN GO.

OKEY-DOKEY.

EIGHTY-SEVEN PERCENT. I'LL TAKE THOSE ODDS.

THIS IS ABSURD! I DON'T HAVE TO SUBMIT TO THIS... THIS...

GENIS! ARE YOU GOING TO TOLERATE THIS TREATMENT OF ME?!

Y'KNOW, MARV... I'VE SEEN STARFOX IN A BUNCH OF DIFFERENT MOODS... BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM..

AFRAID?

YEAH.

STARFOX... "UNCLE EROS"...

WHAT'S GOING *ON?*

TELL ME ***NOW,*** OR YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN IN 2099.

WHAT THE...

...SHOCK?

BOTTOM LINE: SOMEONE NAMED *"THANATOS"* EFFECTIVELY ***KILLED*** ME USING A WEAPON HE CALLED THE SPEAR OF DESTINY. AND UNLESS I DELIVER YOU UP TO HIM, GENIS, AT A PLACE CALLED *"VIRTUAL UNREALITY"* AT SOMEPLACE CALLED ALCHEMAX...

...THEN YOU'RE LOOKING AT ONE VERY ***UNETERNAL*** ETERNAL.

MARVEL

PG-13

CAPTAIN MARVEL

TIME FLIES PART III of IV

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KEEP YOUR GUARDS AT A DISTANCE, TYLER STONE, UNLESS YOU HAVE AN OVERWHELMING DESIRE TO DEAL WITH MULTIPLE CORPSES.

HOLD YOUR POSITION, GENTLEMEN. NO NEED TO RESORT TO SHOOTING MR. THANATOS HERE.

EXCELLENT PHILOSOPHY TO HAVE, TYLER... PARTICULARLY CONSIDERING YOUR WEAPONS WOULD BE HELPLESS AGAINST ME.

SO... WHAT'S YOUR PLAN NOW? HOW MUCH TIME ARE WE GOING TO WASTE -- ?

TIME?

AHAHAHAHAH

AHAHAHAH

HAHAH

HAHA

HAHA

HAH

WELL, IT'S CERTAINLY NICE TO SEE SOMEONE WHO ENJOYS HIS WORK.

WAK

OWWW!

HE IS **GENIS**, SON OF THE LEGENDARY INTERGALACTIC HERO MAR-VELL! LINKED BY DESTINY TO PROFESSIONAL SUPER HERO SIDEKICK **RICK JONES** THROUGH THE ATOM-EXCHANGING NEGA-BANDS, HE IS DRIVEN BY COSMIC AWARENESS TO SEEK OUT AND ELIMINATE THOSE FORCES WHICH THREATEN THE UNIVERSE! **STAN LEE PRESENTS:**

TIME FLIES

CAPTAIN MARVEL

PART 3:

FUTURE SHARES

PETER DAVID WRITER CHRISCROSS PENCILS ANIBAL RODRIGUEZ INKS CHRIS SOTOMAYOR COLORS
RS & COMICRAFT'S ALBERT DESCHESNE LETTERS SUMERAK N' YOUNGQUIST ASSISTANT EDITORS
TOM BREVOORT EDITOR JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT

WHAT... IS THAT? IT LOOKS LIKE... SOME SORT OF MOLECULAR *STEW*...

AS IT WAS EXPLAINED TO ME, IT'S CALLED CHRONOPARTICLES. THANATOS USED THE SPEAR OF DESTINY TO INSERT THEM INTO MY THROAT... KEEP MY INJURY *TEMPORALLY* INERT.

I WOULD HAVE RETURNED TO TITAN, TRIED TO HAVE MY CONDITION ATTENDED TO THERE... BUT HE WARNED ME THE PARTICLES WOULD DISSIPATE IF I WENT TO ANY WORLD EXCEPT EARTH.

HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN BLUFFING, BUT I DIDN'T DESIRE TO CALL HIM ON IT.

SO... NOW YOU KNOW.

WE KNOW?! WE KNOW JACK!

WE KNOW JACK.

WE DO?

APPARENTLY, YES.

WHO'S JACK?

I... DON'T ACTUALLY *KNOW*.

THEN WHY DID YOU BRING THIS JACK PERSON INTO IT AT --

I JUST MEANT WE DIDN'T REALLY KNOW ANYTHING!

WHAT WE... THAT IS, I... WAS *TRYING* TO SAY IS THAT WE REALLY *DON'T KNOW ANYTHING*.

IT'S KIND OF REFRESHING TO MEET SOMEONE THAT PROUD OF HIS OWN *IGNORANCE*.

WAIT HERE, GABRI. I SEE WHERE THIS IS GOING. MIGHT AS WELL BE READY FOR IT.

BUT I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHO IS THIS... THIS THANATOS?

A MADMAN. A MADMAN WITH A SPEAR. BEYOND THAT, I'VE NO CLUE...

HE CLAIMS TO HAVE EXISTED AT A TIME WHEN ALL THE LIGHTS OF THE HEROIC AGE WERE EXTINGUISHED.

SUPPOSEDLY HE WAS *"DISCORPORATED"* IN THE FINAL FIGHT, AND FLOATED AROUND HELPLESS, UNTIL ENERGY FROM THE BEGINNINGS OF THE VIRTUAL UNREALITY PROJECT AT ALCHEMAX SOMEHOW STRENGTHENED HIM.

BECAUSE I GOT DRAGGED IN THERE WITH HIM...

...AND HE SHOCKIN' NEAR *KILLED* ME.

AND JUST WHAT IS THIS *"VIRTUAL UNREALITY"* THAT SO INTERESTS HIM?

IT'S A GATEWAY TO VARIOUS REALITIES... INCLUDING HIS. HE SAID IT WAS HIS *"PLACE OF POWER."*

AND HOW DO *YOU* KNOW ALL THIS?

AND YOU'RE GETTING INVOLVED WITH HIM *AGAIN?* MIGGY, IT'S NUTS!

YEAH. YEAH, I *KNOW.* WELCOME TO MY *WORLD,* LITTLE BROTHER.

BE PROUD OF HIM, GABRIEL. HE DOES THESE THINGS... BECAUSE HE'S HEROIC. BECAUSE HE STRIVES TO REACH A GREATER IDEAL OF BEHAVIOR. BECAUSE --

BECAUSE I'M AN *IDIOT.*

YOU. *RED.* DO THAT THING AGAIN WHERE YOU TAKE OUT THE WINDOW WITH YOUR BRAIN, OKAY?

GREAT. THANKS.

WELL, GENTLEMEN? YOU COMING? I'M LED TO BELIEVE THAT MR. FOX HERE IS ON THE CLOCK.

APPARENTLY SO.

THEN LET'S FLY. YOU *WANT* ALCHEMAX? YOU *GOT* *ALCHEMAX.*

MEANTIME, IN THE WORLD'S MOST LEISURELY-PACED SUBPLOT...

MARLO? I HATE TO YANK YOU AWAY FROM POTTY DUTY...

UH... MAR...?

MARLO? WHAT, UHM... WHAT'RE YOU DOIN'?

SINCE I CAN'T TAPE DOWN THE TOILET, IN CASE CAPTAIN MARVEL OR STARFOX NEEDS TO COME BACK OUT THROUGH IT, I FIGURE I WANT TO BE HERE JUST IN CASE SOMETHING *NASTY* POPS ITS HEAD OUT.

LIKE... A RAT?

A RAT. YEAH. OR *MEPHISTO*. GOTTA BE PREPARED FOR *ANYTHING*.

IS IT AS *FUN* BEING YOU AS IT *LOOKS*?

IT'S JUST THAT THE UPS GUY IS HERE WITH THE NEW COMICS, AND YOU USUALLY LIKE TO SIGN FOR THOSE.

OH. RIGHT.

HERE. IF ANYTHING MOVES THAT DOESN'T HAVE A STARRY FACE, LET FLY.

Y'KNOW... BILL LIEBOWITZ'S EMPLOYEES ONLY HAVE TO SELL COMIC BOOKS. *THEY* DON'T HAVE TO PLAY WHACK-A-MOLE WITH A TOILET.

SEE WHAT THEY'RE MISSING OUT ON?

I THINK I'M STARTING TO FORGET WHAT HAVING A *NORMAL* DAY IS LIKE.

OH, BOO HOO. I'M A GHOST THAT ONLY MARLO SEES. SO YOU GET NO SYMPATHY POINTS FROM *ME*.

LIGHT LOAD THIS WEEK, PAUL.

NO COMPLAINTS HERE. I *PREFER* GOING RIGHT IN, DUMPING MY LOAD, AND GETTING OUT FAST.

YOUR WIFE MUST *LOVE* THAT.

AH, THE GLAMOROUS LIFE OF RUNNING A COMIC BOOK STORE. THE THRILLS, THE EXCITEMENT...

...THE UNSOLD INVENTORY... THE GUESSWORK...

I'VE GOT TOO MUCH BACKSTOCK SITTING AROUND. I GOTTA FIND SOME WAY TO MOVE IT OUT... BECAUSE OTHERWISE, WHEN IT COMES TO FUTURE ORDERS...

HAR-DEE-HAR. YOU'RE A *RIOT*, MARLO.

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK.

...THERE'S GONNA HAVE TO BE SOME PRETTY DRASTIC SLASHING AROUND HERE.

STARFOX... WHAT HAPPENS ONCE WE ARRIVE AT THIS ALCHEMAX PLACE?

I'M NOT SURE. WHEN SOMEONE HAS A SPEAR THROUGH YOUR THROAT, YOU'RE NOT IN MUCH OF A POSITION TO ARGUE.

YEAH, ABOUT THAT *SPEAR*, MARV...

...HE SAID IT WAS THE "*SPEAR OF DESTINY*"?

YES, THAT'S RIGHT. YOU'VE HEARD OF IT, RICK?

OHHHHH YEAH. *MAJOR* ARTIFACT OF POWER. SUPPOSEDLY IT WAS USED BY A ROMAN SOLDIER TO STAB JESUS ON THE CROSS.

AH. I SEE. AND JESUS WOULD BE...?

LONG STORY *SHORT:* NICE JEWISH BOY WHO WENT INTO HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS.

INCOMING!

WHERE? I DON'T SEE ANYTHING...?

YOU WILL!

OH. OKAY.

THE THING IS, THE SPEAR'S POWER IS POSSIBLY LIMITLESS.

HITLER BELIEVED IF HE COULD GET IT, HE WOULD TRIUMPH OVER THE ALLIES.

ADOLF HITLER? LEADER OF THE NAZIS?

HIM YOU'VE HEARD OF?

RICK, YOU WATCH "*RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*" EVERY TIME IT'S ON CABLE

HOW COULD I *NOT* HAVE HEARD OF HIM?

"SITUATION EMERGENCY GEAR. SIEGE FOR SHORT. HIGHLY TRAINED, VERY NASTY."

ANCILLARY TARGETS: SPIDER-MAN, AND A BEING WITH STARS TATTOOED ON HIS FACE.

RED-HAIRED INDIVIDUAL IS EXUDING PARTICLES MATCHING THE WAVE SIGNATURE WE'VE BEEN PROVIDED. HE'S DEFINITELY OUR TARGET.

STATUS OF ANCILLARY TARGETS?

DISPOSABLE.

SMASH!

WELL, I THINK WE CAN SAFELY SURMISE WHO THEY'RE INTERESTED IN.

OKAY! I'LL DRAW OFF THESE TWO, AND TRY TO BRING THEM AROUND SO WE CAN --

BRAKKA-KA-KA-K

EH?

I'M NOT SURE IF MY WEBBING HAS ENOUGH TENSILE STRENGTH TO SNAP AN ARMORED NECK.

MIGHT BE *INTERESTING* TO FIND OUT.

SPIDER-MAN! *HOLD ON!* I'LL BE *RIGHT* THERE!

YOU *OVERESTIMATE* YOURSELF... AND *UNDERESTIMATE* ME...!

AARRGHH-!

SOMEBODY... SOMEBODY *HELP*... M...

WHATEVER THANATOS HAS... HAS DONE TO ME...

CAN'T... CAN'T HOLD IT TOGETHER... MUCH LONG --

WHAT IN THE PAMA IS THAT?!

IT'S DOC DOOM'S TIME MACHINE! I'D KNOW IT ANYWHERE!

A TIME MACHINE?! BUT... WHERE DID IT TAKE STARFOX?

WHO AM I, *RIP HUNTER*? HOW THE HELL SHOULD I KNOW?

ALCHEMAX IS MY GUESS! HE SAID THANATOS WANTED HIM THERE.

MY GUESS IS, THANATOS STARTED TO GET IMPATIENT, AND SOMEHOW SENT THAT... THAT THING FOR HIM!

AND IF IT'S THANATOS, IT PROBABLY HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH VIRTUAL UNREALITY. SO IF YOU WANT TO FIND HIM, WE HEAD FOR ALCHEMAX.

BUT OUR INSTRUCTIONS WERE TO CAPTURE YOU AND TAKE YOU THERE!

IF YOU HAD JUST OPENED YOUR MOUTHS, ALL OF THIS COULD HAVE BEEN *AVOIDED!*

GREAT. I'M LOOKING A *HUNDRED* YEARS INTO THE FUTURE, AND WHAT ARE THE TWO BIG ADVANCEMENTS? SPIDER-MAN AND GRATUITOUS FIGHTS. NICE TO SEE HOW MUCH WE ADVANCE.

HEY! MARV! ASK SPIDEY IF HE KNOWS THE FIRST YEAR IN THE 21ST CENTURY THE RED SOX WIN THE WORLD SERIES! I COULD MAKE A FORTUNE ON THAT BET!

I MEAN, YEAH, IT'S KINDA *BACK TO THE FUTURE II*, BUT EVEN SO...

THIS MAY SOUND ODD, BUT... HAVE THE RED SOX *EVER* WON THE WORLD SERIES IN THIS CENTURY?

NO.

NUTS! THE CUBS?

CUBS?

UH-UH.

D'OH!

HOW... HOW DID I...?

SUCCESSFUL TEST OF THE TIME PLATFORM, I'D SAY.

UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S STILL *VERY* LIMITED IN ITS ABILITIES. THE DAMAGE IT SUFFERED IN THE EON WAR WAS RATHER DEVASTATING.

THE *WHAT?*

THE ***EON WAR.*** THE MASSIVE TEMPORAL CONFLICT WHICH BROUGHT AN END TO WHAT YOU CALL THE FIRST HEROIC AGE.

BUT HISTORY INCLUDES NONE OF THE DETAILS, BECAUSE THE WAR ERASED ALL RECORDS OF ITSELF AFTER IT OCCURRED.

IT WAS THE CHINESE FOOD OF WAR. HALF AN HOUR LATER IT WAS AS IF THERE HADN'T BEEN ONE AT ALL.

KABLAMM!

KNOCK KNOCK.

MY, MY. YOU WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED TO OLD HOME WEEK.

HAVE SEEN TWO *SIEGE* OFFICERS, WOULD YOU?

I'M SURE THEY'RE HANGING AROUND *SOMEWHERE.*

HUNH. SOUNDS LIKE THE CHINESE FOOD OF WAR. HALF AN HOUR LATER, IT WAS LIKE THERE HADN'T BEEN A WAR AT ALL.

SO... YOU'RE THANATOS.

STARFOX... ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

FOR THE MOMENT. THANATOS HERE WAS JUST TELLING US ABOUT THE EON WAR... A TEMPORAL CONFLICT THAT NO ONE REMEMBERS.

AND YOU'RE CAPTAIN MARVEL. THE LATEST IN THE SERIES. COLLECT THEM ALL, AND TRADE THEM WITH YOUR FRIENDS... PROVIDED ANY OF YOUR FRIENDS ARE ALIVE.

MINE ARE ALL DEAD. BUT I'M GOING TO *DO* SOMETHING ABOUT THAT.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, THANATOS?

YES, WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

OH, LIKE HE'S GONNA TELL YOU GUYS *NOW!*

THE VILLAIN ALWAYS WAITS UNTIL THE HEROES ARE SOMEHOW TRAPPED, AND *THEN* HE SPILLS HIS GUTS! NO WAY IS HE GOING TO TELL Y --

YOU KNOW WHAT? JUST TO BE DIFFERENT... I'LL FILL YOU IN *EARLIER* THAN I REALLY SHOULD. AFTER ALL, WE'RE ALL ADVANCED THINKERS IN 2099, CORRECT?

NEXT YEAR WILL, AFTER ALL, START THE 22ND CENTURY. SO WE NEED NOT BE SLAVES TO TRADI --

ACTUALLY, THE 22ND CENTURY DOESN'T START UNTIL 2101. NEXT YEAR IS REALLY THE *LAST* YEAR OF THE *21ST* CENTURY.

WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT? THE 22ND CENTURY STARTS NEXT YEAR.

NO, IT *DOESN'T.* SEE, THERE WAS NO YEAR ZERO, SO WE COUNT A HUNDRED YEARS FROM --

AW, JUDAS PRIEST, ARE WE GONNA GO THROUGH THAT STUPID ARGUMENT *EVERY* CENTURY?!

AS RIVETING AS THIS DISCUSSION IS, GENTLEMEN, I'M AFRAID... *DESTINY CALLS!*

OUT! EVERYBODY OUT!

STARFOX!

AWWWW NO, YOU DON'T! NOT THIS AGAIN!

AS YOU WISH.

YOU MAY, INSTEAD, DIE RIGHT HERE AND NOW.

KLANG

FWOOP

FAREWELL, 2099! AND *GREETINGS*, MY OLD HOME! GREETINGS TO...

INNERSPACE! THE CROSSROADS WHERE ALL THINGS ARE HAPPENING AT ONCE!

THAT, RICK JONES, IS HOW YOU ARE KEEPING COMMUNICATION WITH CAPTAIN MARVEL, EVEN FROM THE HEART OF THE MICROVERSE! OUR CROSSINGS TO ALTERED REALITIES ARE THROUGH THIS NEXUS WHERE *ALL* IS POSSIBLE!

BUT EVEN THOUGH MY STAY HERE HAS MADE ME MASTER OF INNERSPACE... IT IS REALITY ITSELF THAT I WANT TO REORDER! DOCTOR DOOM'S TIME MACHINE IS ONE OF THE KEYS TO THAT DESIRE! AND THE OTHER KEYS ARE TO BE FOUND...

WHERE...?

WHERE... *ARE* WE?

I...I THINK WE'VE TIME TRAVELED AGAIN. HAVE *YOU* EVER...?

ONCE. I MET THE ORIGINAL SPIDER-MAN. WOUND UP IN BED WITH HIS *WIFE.*

I DON'T REMEMBER INVITING ANY GUESTS. DO YOU, MINISTER?

WELL, WELL, WELL...

NO, MAESTRO, I MOST CERTAINLY DO *NOT.*

WHA...? WHAT AM I... DOING...

...HERE? I... WAS IN THE *MICROVERSE.* SO HOW DID I -- ?

YOU ARE IN A REALITY WHEREIN YOU AND CAPTAIN MARVEL WERE *NEVER* MOLECULARLY BONDED. SO YOU ARE ABLE TO COEXIST WITH HIM.

HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT? AND WHERE'S MARV?! WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE* WITH HIM?

ARRANGED FOR HIM TO BE ELSEWHERE... SO WE THREE COULD HAVE THIS MOMENT ALONE.

WE THREE... WHAT?

WE THREE KINGS. THROUGH *THERE,* RICK.

DON'T WORRY. IT WON'T BITE.

HUH?!

Flark.

They say "Flark" now when they're really upset.

I suppose I should be really surprised to see a younger version of myself waltz in here.

But *nothin'* surprises me anymore, I just roll with it.

Get it? Roll with it?

AW, MAN, I DON'T BELIEVE THIS! I JUST GET DONE WITH BEING A *SENIOR CITIZEN*...

...AND NOW I SEE MYSELF LOOKING LIKE I SHOULD BE HOSTING A CABLE HORROR ANTHOLOGY!

...WHAT'S *NEXT*, FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD?! I BECOME A SUPER-VILLAIN?!

WHAT... THE... F --

WELL... SINCE YOU *ASKED*...

SO...

...DUDE...

...WHILE WE WAIT FOR THE FINAL KEY SO THAT I CAN RESHAPE THE WORLD, MAKE SURE I NEVER CREATE THE HULK, AND TAKE OVER THE GALAXY DURING THE KREE-SKRULL WAR...

...DO YOU HAVE ANY BEER AROUND HERE?

CAPTAIN MARVEL

TIME FLIES PART IV of IV

WWW.MAR

jose

MARVEL PGM 30

GOLDEN ORANGE COMICS. LOS ANGELES.

I'VE GOT TOO MUCH BACKSTOCK SITTING AROUND. I GOTTA FIND SOME WAY TO MOVE IT OUT... BECAUSE OTHERWISE, WHEN IT COMES TO FUTURE ORDERS, THERE'S GONNA HAVE TO BE SOME PRETTY DRASTIC *SLASHING* AROUND HERE.

EXIT

MARLO! AL SAID YOU WERE BACK HERE.

JMS! SHOULD'VE KNOWN. IT'S NEW COMICS DAY, *SO NATURALLY* YOU'RE HERE.

LOOK, AL SUGGESTED I *CHAT* WITH YOU. HE SAID YOU'RE ACTING STRANGE, EVEN DEPRESSED. THAT YOU JUST SIT IN THE BATHROOM ALL DAY AND SAY ODD THINGS.

YOU WOULDN'T *UNDERSTAND.* JOE.

TRY ME. OH, HERE, LET ME *GET* THOSE FOR YOU.

OKAY. I'LL GRAB THE DOORSTOP.

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW THE PROBLEM, JOE, IT'S THIS: CAPTAIN MARVEL'S GONE DOWN THE *TOILET.*

REALLY? I MEAN, I KNOW SALES HAVEN'T BEEN *SPECTACULAR,* BUT MAYBE THAT'LL *CHANGE.*

MAYBE SOME GUEST STARS, OR A FOUR-PART STORYLINE WITH A SHOCK ENDING...

SEE, JOE, I *TOLD* YOU YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND.

I DON'T *UNDERSTAND.*

ONE MOMENT I'M IN THE YEAR 2099, WITH GENIS AND THAT ERA'S SPIDER-MAN... THEN I'M HAULED INTO THE AREA CALLED "*INNERSPACE...*"

AND SUDDENLY I'M HERE... WHEREVER "*HERE*" IS.

"*HERE,*" STARFOX, IS A VARIANT FUTURE. YOU'RE IN THE STRONGHOLD OF AN INDIVIDUAL CALLED THE MAESTRO.

HE HAS SOMETHING I REQUIRE, AND WHICH YOU MUST GET FOR ME... IF YOUR LIFE REMAINS *IMPORTANT* TO YOU.

I'M GOING TO KILL YOU, THANATOS... FOR PUTTING ME THROUGH THIS. JAMMING THE SPEAR OF DESTINY THROUGH MY THROAT... BLACK-MAILING ME... KILLING AN INNOCENT WOMAN.

OH, YES. I *WILL* KILL YOU FOR THIS.

NOT IF YOU'RE DEAD BEFORE YOU HAVE THE CHANCE.

THE OBJECT YOU SEEK IS THE AMULET AND CLOAK OF DOCTOR STRANGE. THE MAESTRO HAS IT AS A *SOUVENIR.* IT'S SOMEWHERE WITHIN. FIND IT... OR LOSE YOUR CHANCE FOR *VENGEANCE.*

"*SOUVENIR.*" WHO IS THIS "*MAESTRO,*" ANYWAY?

THE FUTURE, *EVIL* INCARNATION OF THE HULK.

YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS!

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED HE MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT MY STEALING HIS PROPERTY?

OHHH... I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT...

"I THINK HE'LL BE FAIRLY WELL OCCUPIED *ELSEWHERE.*

"AND NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, STARFOX... I HAVE PREPARATIONS TO MAKE. WHY, THERE'S SO MUCH TO DO THAT I'M POSITIVELY *BESIDE* MYSELF."

SOOOOO THE THREE OF US... YOU, ME, AND OLD ME THERE... WE'RE KIND OF LIKE ONE OF THOSE --

-- RAMA TUT, KANG AND IMMORTUS DEALS?

UH HUH.

PRETTY MUCH IT, YEAH.

OKAY, GOT'CHA.

Named my great granddaughter after Janis Joplin. Did I **mention** that?

ABOUT *THREE TIMES* SINCE I GOT HERE, YEAH.

Great name, Janis.

TIME FLIES CONCLUSION: JONESING

PETER DAVID WRITER CHRISCROSS PENCILS
RODRIGUEZ & PEROTTA INKS CHRIS SOTOMAYOR COLORS
RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S ALBERT DESCHESNE LETTERS
MARC SUMERAK ASSISTANT EDITOR TOM BREVOORT EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF, BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT

HEY. OLD RICK. HOW'D YOU GET THOR'S *HAMMER* IN HERE, SINCE IT'S TOO HEAVY TO MOVE? *MACHINERY?*

Name. Called a name. Can't remember. On... tip of my tongue...

JANIS. YOUR GREAT GRANDDAUGHTER. THE NAME IS JANIS FOR JANIS JOPLIN. AGAIN.

Oh. Right. I guess.

OKAY, ENOUGH'S ENOUGH. YOU'RE CALLING YOURSELF "THANATOS," ALTHOUGH OBVIOUSLY YOU'RE SOME WEIRD *ALTERNATE* VERSION OF ME.

STRANGE. FROM WHERE I SIT, *YOU'RE* SOME WEIRD ALTERNATE VERSION OF *ME.*

FUNNY HOW THAT WORKS.

"*FUNNY*" HA HA OR "*FUNNY*" STRANGE?

KNOCK IT OFF!

YOU KNOCK IT OFF!

GOT ANYTHING ELSE TO SAY?
NO? GOOD.
OKAY, LOOK... HERE'S THE *DEAL*...
REMEMBER THE KREE/SKRULL WAR? THE INTELLIGENCE SUPREME UNLEASHED A PSYCHIC POWER WHICH SUPPOSEDLY ALL HUMANS HAVE WITHIN THEM...
...THAT THING WHICH CAME TO BE KNOWN AS THE DESTINY FORCE.
I USED IT TO CREATE A BUNCH OF GOLDEN AGE SUPER HEROES TO FIGHT A DELAYING ACTION. PRETTY TAME STUFF. BUT YOU GOTTA *WALK* BEFORE YOU CAN RUN.
THE THING WAS... IN YOUR REALITY... YOU WOUND UP RE-MERGING WITH MAR-VELL SHORTLY THEREAFTER. IN *MINE*... THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN. AND I WOUND UP ELECTING TO STAY WITH THE INTELLIGENCE SUPREME, WHO WANTED TO TEACH ME TO HARNESS THE DESTINY FORCE.
STEVE THREW A FIT, BUT EVEN HE COULDN'T TALK ME OUT OF IT. HE SAID THE SUPREMOR WANTED TO MANIPULATE THE POWER FOR HIS *OWN ENDS*.
WHICH, OF COURSE, WAS TRUE.
YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN THE SUPREMOR'S EXPRESSION RIGHT BEFORE I KILLED HIM. PRICELESS, I'M TELLIN' YA.
Your basic absolute power corrupting absolutely thing...
YEAH, I *GOT* THAT.
Just thought I'd mention. Case ya missed it.
NO, I'M ON THE SAME PAGE, THANKS.
What was that name again...?
JANIS, OKAY? JANIS. *GOD*, YOU'RE EMBARRASSING.
SEE, THE THING WAS... I'M REALLY THE DEFINITIVE MODEL OF WHAT WE SHOULD BE. I MEAN, LOOK AT YOU, *RICK*... IN YOUR WORLD, YOU'RE MERGED WITH CAPTAIN MARVEL AND YOUR MARRIAGE IS TOUCH AND GO.
AND OLD RICK, GEEZ, *HE'S* AS MUCH OF A RELIC AS HIS *TOYS*.
THERE'S REALLY NO NEED FOR ANY *OTHER* VERSIONS OF US, YOU KNOW?

"SO I PUT TOGETHER A PLAN. TOOK ME *AGES* OF TRIAL AND ERROR TO DO IT. DESTROYED SEVERAL WORLDS AND AT LEAST ONE UNIVERSE, CAUSED A FEW CRISES... BUT I'VE FINALLY GOT IT *DOWN* THIS TIME.

"I NEEDED TO COMBINE ELEMENTS OF SCIENCE, SORCERY AND MYTHOLOGY... WHICH REALLY *ARE* THE SAME THING, YOU KNOW, EXCEPT WITH DIFFERENT RULES.

"MY LAST OUTING GOT ME DISCORPORATED, SO OBVIOUSLY I DIDN'T WANT A REPEAT OF *THAT* DISASTER. SO THIS TIME I OBTAINED SOME CATSPAWS TO DO THE WORK FOR ME. SAFER THAT WAY.

"BEFORE TOO LONG, STARFOX WILL HAVE ACQUIRED THE FINAL ITEM I NEED. THEN I'LL BRING HIM HERE AND USING THE COMBINED POWERS OF THESE INVENTIONS AND TALISMANS... PLUS THE LIFE FORCE-MERGED-WITH-CHRONOPARTICLES THAT I BESTOWED UPON STARFOX...

TAKE ME TO THE CAPE AND AMULET OF DOCTOR STRANGE, OR I'LL SNAP YOUR *NECK*.

"...I WILL BECOME THE TEMPLATE FOR WHAT RICK JONES IS, AND SHOULD HAVE BEEN, AND WILL BE, EVERYWHERE THROUGHOUT THE MULTIVERSE. LIKE THE BUDDHIST SAID TO THE HOT DOG VENDOR, I WILL BE MADE ONE WITH EVERYTHING."

I WILL BE... THE *ULTIMATE* RICK JONES!

WELL? WHAT DO YOU *THINK?*

Can I have some ice cream?

WHO THE FLARK IS THE MAESTRO FIGHTING?

I DON'T KNOW! SOME SORT OF FREAKS! BUT IT'S NOTHING THE *MAESTRO* CAN'T HANDLE!

WE'LL JUST BE PROVIDING MOP-UP FOR --

WHAT THE--?!

WHERE DID THIS THING COME FROM?

CAN'T MOVE--!

THAT'S THE IDEA.

I *REMEMBER* YOU NOW! CAPTAIN MAR-VELL, ISN'T IT? YOU LOOK DIFFERENT, BUT I RECOGNIZE SOME OF THE ACCOUTREMENTS. OBVIOUSLY YOU HAVEN'T DIED OF CANCER YET.

IS THIS SOME STUNT OF THE REBELS? DID THEY SUMMON YOU FROM THE PAST SOMEHOW?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT REBELS YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT OR WHO YOU ARE...

...BUT I CAN CERTAINLY SPOT A *BAD GUY* EASILY ENOUGH.

AH, I'D FORGOTTEN HOW QUAINT IS YOUR OLD WORLD OF GOOD GUYS AND BAD GUYS.

WHAT I *HAVEN'T* FORGOTTEN, HOWEVER...

...IS *WHAT HAPPENS* WHEN YOUR *WRIST BANDS* ARE SLAMMED TOGETHER!

WHAT THE HELL? WHERE'S JONES?

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO SWITCH MOLECULES WITH THAT IDIOT, RICK JONES!

SORRY I COULDN'T ACCOMMODATE YOU. WAIT... ACTUALLY, I'M *NOT* SORRY.

AND SINCE THIS *GRAND THRONE ROOM* OF YOURS HAS CLEARED OUT OF INNOCENT BYSTANDERS...

...I CAN ACTUALLY *CUT LOOSE!*

I WAS BEING CAREFUL EARLIER, YOU SEE. YET ANOTHER ONE OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GOOD GUYS AND BAD GUYS. AND HERE'S ONE *MORE:*

THE GOOD GUYS ALWAYS WIN!

AND IT'S *NOT* MAR-VELL! IT'S JUST "CAPTAIN MARVEL," YOU MORON!

THE DOOM

REMIND ME NOT TO PISS YOU *OFF.*

WHAT WAS HE TRYING TO DO, BANGING THOSE WRISTS BANDS OF YOURS TOGETHER?

SOMETHING THAT ACTUALLY SHOULD HAVE WORKED, EVEN THOUGH HE CONFUSED ME WITH MY FATHER. AND I'M NOT SURE WHY IT DIDN'T. NOT THAT I'M KNOCKING IT...

UH-OH.

AW, *SHOCK.*

OH, *GOOD GUY!* I'M GOING TO SMASH IN THE *HEADS* OF SOME OF YOUR PRECIOUS INNOCENT BYSTANDERS!

I'M ALLOWED TO *DO* THAT, YOU SEE, WHAT WITH BEING THE *BAD GUY.*

ARRRHHH--!

ZWAAM

SCARPER, KIDS! LOOKS LIKE THE MAESTRO HAS TO DEAL WITH A NEW STUDLY IN TOWN.

DAKORD! GET 'EM OUTTA HERE!

I SCAN *THAT*, JANIS.

FWIZZZ

NOW WHAT? HOW LONG DO YOU THINK *THIS* WILL SLOW ME?

JUST *LONG ENOUGH!*

THIS IS IT. I'D RECOGNIZE IT ANYWHERE. THIS IS DOCTOR STRANGE'S MYSTICAL TALISMAN, ALL RIGHT.

THE AMULET, AND THIS, THE CLOAK. THANK YOU FOR YOUR *AID*, MINISTER.

NO NEED TO SAY ANYTHING. I KNOW YOU WERE ONLY TOO *EAGER* TO HELP.

THE QUESTION BECOMES: NOW WHAT? THANATOS CLAIMED HE WOULD KNOW WHEN I HAD ACHIEVED MY GOAL... BUT WAS HE SIMPLY *BOASTING*, OR --

THE TIME PLATFORM OF DOCTOR DOOM! WELL! IT APPEARS THAT THANATOS INDEED *KNOWS* WHAT HE'S ABOUT.

Name's on the tip of my tongue...

YOU KNOW, I MAY JUST GO AHEAD AND SHOOT THE OLD ONE JUST TO PUT HIM OUT OF OUR MISERY.

AH! AND JUMPING FROM THE IMMEDIATE PAST TO THE NOW COMES OUR CATSPAW...

WELL DONE, STARFOX.

I DON'T NEED YOUR PRAISE, THANATOS...

I NEED YOUR *HEAD* ON A *STICK!*

HA! *GET* HIM, RICK! HIT HIM *HIGH* WHILE I HIT H --

UHHHH! *NOOO!* SO... SO WEAK! BLAST IT, *NO!* NOT *NOW!*

THAT'S *FAR ENOUGH*, RICK! I'VE BEEN DOING THIS LONG ENOUGH THAT I DON'T *NEED* TO SEE TO BE *DEADLY ACCURATE!*

THAT WAS A *FOOLISH MOVE*, STARFOX! YOU'VE BEEN A HANDY TOOL... BUT YOU'RE NOT ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR THE FINAL PROCEDURES! YOU WERE MY BACK-UP IN CASE ONE OF THE PIECES I SOUGHT WAS UNATTAINABLE.

BUT SINCE THAT HASN'T HAPPENED, AND YOUR WEAKNESS IS BECOMING INCONVENIENT, YOU'RE RAPIDLY OUTLIVING YOUR USEFULNESS.

SO LET'S NOT PRESS OUR *LUCK*, SHALL WE?

IT ALL HINGES ON *ME*, YOU KNOW! THAT IS TO SAY... ON *US!*

IF I HADN'T WANDERED OUT ONTO THAT TESTING RANGE, THEN NO HULK!

LATER I SUMMONED HEROES TO BATTLE THE HULK, AND THEY FORMED THE AVENGERS! SO NO *HULK*, NO AVENGERS! NO *AVENGERS...*

NO WORLD!

INSTEAD WHAT'S LEFT IN ALL THE MULTIVERSE WILL BE SHAPED IN MY IMAGE! MINE... AND THE POWER OF THE DESTINY FORCE, WIELDED AS NONE EVER *HAVE!* AS NONE EVER *COULD!*

YEARS I SPENT... YEARS!... BEING A *SIDEKICK!* A POWERLESS *HANGER-ON!* NO MORE! THAT ENDS HERE, NOW AND THEN, FOR ALL TIME AND ALL TIMES!

WHO'S YOUR DADDY? C'MON! ***WHO'S YOUR DADDY?!***

CAPTAIN MARVEL!

I'LL ANNIHILATE YOU FOR THIS! YOU AND... AND WHOEVER THAT OTHER FOOL IS!

WHERE DID YOU GET THAT COSTUME, ANYWAY? A DAY OF THE DEAD FESTIVAL?

WELL... UHM... *YES,* ACTUALLY.

LOOK AT THIS! I'LL BE PICKING THIS GARBAGE OUT OF MY BEARD FOR ***WEEKS!*** I'VE CHANGED MY MIND, WALL-CRAWLER. YOU'RE NOW FIRST ON MY HIT PARADE.

SORRY, MAESTRO. TO DO THAT, YOU'LL HAVE TO COME THROUGH ME!

KRAKKRHHH

I'M... NOT FROM *AROUND* HERE, ACTUALLY.

NOW WHAT -- YOU?!

MARV! HOW--?

If I could just... remember that name...

GENIS! LOOK OUT! BEHIND Y--

NOOOOOO!

YES! IT'S WORKING! *IT'S WORKING!* ALL THE POWERS THAT EXIST, REAL AND UNREAL. NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL, MERGING AROUND ME! I CAN FEEL IT! MY SPIRIT, MY ESSENCE, THE GREATNESS THAT IS ME, BECOMING THE MODEL FOR ALL THE MULTIVERSE!

IN EVERY ASPECT, IN EVERY VARIANT, I AM THE *ULTIMATE* OF ULTIMATES!

OH MY GOD! IT'S FULL OF... *ME!*

THE... THE HAMMER...? WHAT--?

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THOR'S HAMMER?!

KRAAASH

Heh. Finally remembered the name. Mjolnir's secret name... that made it come when Thor **called**...

He whispered it to me... right before he died.

I was deemed **worthy**, y'see... for stuff that **you** ain't done **yet**, Rick-O... and you, helmet head... you ain't **never** gonna do...

PUT IT... DOWN...! Y'HEAR? DROP... THE HAMMER... OLD MAN! NOW!

Aw, blow it out our harmonica, y' meatball.

Hey boys! you **heard** him! Let's put the **hammer down!** I need a power boost! So **bang those bands--!**

...and we'll make this bozo hit the bricks!

SHAZAM

NO! NOOOO! YOU -- YOU--!

YOU GUYS REALLY SUUUUCK!

TAKE A MESSAGE TO YOUR FELLOW REBELS IN HELL... THAT THE MAESTRO IS SENDING *ALL* OF THEM TH --

HUH?

HUH?

HUH?

HOW... HOW DID... WHY...?

I...I DON'T *UNDERSTAND.* I'M... WHOLE AGAIN! I'M BACK IN MY OWN TIME! IN THE HOTEL ROOM WHERE THANATOS ASSAULTED ME! BUT... THIS IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE! I HAVE A MILLION QUESTIONS -- !

MMMMM... STAAAARFOX...

EVERY SINGLE *ONE* OF WHICH CAN *WAIT.*

IS... IS HE...?

ZZZ

GUESS HE OVEREXERTED HIMSELF.

KNOWING *HIS* MEMORY, HE'LL PROBABLY WAKE UP WONDERING WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TROPHY ROOM.

BUT WHERE'S STARFOX? AND--?

BACK IN HIS OWN TIME. SPIDER-MAN, TOO. THE ENERGIES UNLEASHED BY THE DEMISE OF THANATOS CUT ACROSS TIME AND REALITY AND SENT ALL THE PLAYERS IN THIS LITTLE INSANITY BACK WHERE THEY CAME FROM.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

THAT'S AN ***ADVANTAGE*** TO BEING COSMICALLY AWARE, RICK. YOU GET TO ***KNOW*** THESE THINGS. UNFORTUNATELY, ONE OF THOSE RETURNEES WAS YOU... TO THE MICROVERSE. THE ENERGIES REMERGED US.

YEAH, THAT FIGURES. AND HOW WILL WE GET BACK?

DOOM'S TIME MACHINE. IT MAY BE SUPERSCIENCE ON EARTH, BUT THE MECHANISM SEEMS PRETTY SIMPLE TO ME.

AREN'T WE MR. FABOO? SAY... IZZAT WHAT I *THINK* IT IS--?

YUP. THE TRANSFORMED REMAINS OF THANATOS.

I THINK THE OLD ME STILL HAD A DASH OF THE DESTINY FORCE IN HIM, BENDING NOT ONLY TIME, BUT REALITY. WHEN HE SAID "HIT THE BRICKS"...

...HE WASN'T KIDDING AROUND.

GOLDEN GRAHAMS

NOW, MARLO, IT CAN'T BE THAT BAD...

IT SHOULDN'T BE, JOE... BUT IT *IS!*

I'M STARTING TO THINK, MAYBE IT'S NOT RICK, BUT ME! MAYBE I'M A JINX!

HEY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO CONVINCE *ME*. YOU GOT ME KILLED. *TWICE.*

MARLO, THAT'S RIDICULOUS. YOU'RE *NOT* A JINX.

HOW DO WE *KNOW*, HUH? FOR A MICROSECOND, RICK AND I WERE BACK TOGETHER, AND THEN BAM, I BOTCHED IT AND SENT HIM...

SENT HIM WHERE?

NEVER MIND! IT'S TOO RIDICULOUS! MY WHOLE *LIFE* IS TOO RIDICULOUS! GOD, I WISH I... I WISH I WAS *DEAD!*

OH, MARLO, YOU SHOULDN'T SAY THINGS LIKE TH --

MARLO?

MARLO?

THUUUD

OHHHHH CRAP...

SPIDER-MAN 2099 #9

HI, I'M LYLA, MIGUEL'S LYRATE LIFE-FORM APPROXIMATION HOLOGRAPHIC ASSISTANT.

HERE'S THE DOWNLOAD ON **SPIDER-MAN 2099's** BACKSTORY.

MIGUEL O'HARA WAS A YOUNG GENETICS GENIUS EMPLOYED AT MEGACORPORATION **ALCHEMAX** IN THE FUTURE CITY OF **NUEVA YORK**. ONE OF HIS EXPERIMENTS, TO REPLICATE THE POWERS OF YOUR CURRENT SPIDER-MAN, REWROTE HIS DNA TO MAKE IT **50% SPIDER!** HE GAINED **AMAZING POWERS** AND BECAME THE SPIDER-MAN OF THE YEAR 2099.

AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SAFE ZONE, MIGUEL AND LADY SPIDER FOUND THE ROBOT LEOPARDON BELONGING TO THE NOTORIOUS **SUPAIDAMAN!**

THE TWO USED LORD OSBORN'S EARTH-803 LAB TO REPAIR IT BUT WERE INTERRUPTED BY THE PRESENCE OF THE SIX MEN OF SINESTRY! AWARE OF THE INHERITORS' VULNERABILITY TO RADIOACTIVITY, MIGUEL EQUIPPED LEOPARDON WITH A RADIOACTIVE POWER CENTER HARVESTED FROM DOCTOR OCTOPUS'S ARMS.

AFTER AN EXPLOSIVE AND DANGEROUS BATTLE, THE SPIDERS OF THE MULTIVERSE DEFEATED THE INHERITORS AND MIGUEL O'HARA FINALLY RETURNED HOME TO THE YEAR 2099...

THIS...THIS CAN'T BE. I WAS...

I WAS SUPPOSED TO WIND UP IN 2099. THIS CAN'T BE IT.

THIS CAN'T BE MY HOME. THIS IS...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE SHOCK THIS IS

MY MIND FEELS LIKE IT'S SHUTTING DOWN. I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M SEEING. NONE OF THIS MAKES ANY SENSE.

WHO DID THIS? WHO THE SHOCK DID THIS?

IT'S GONE. NUEVA YORK IS JUST JUST GONE.

HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE? THIS NEVER HAPPENED. NOTHING LIKE THIS *EVER* HAPPENED.

IS IT SOMETHING THAT MORLUN AND COMPANY WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR? IS THAT IT?

THERE'S NO SIGN OF MOVEMENT. NO SIGN OF ANYTHING.

ARE THEY THE ONES WHO TURNED MY HOME INTO A WASTELAND?

WHATEVER HAPPENED HERE, NO ONE COULD POSSIBLY HAVE SURVIVED IT.

MY HOME DIED AND EVERYONE DIED WITH IT.

I'M THE LAST SURVIVOR OF 2099.

HOLD IT. WHAT THE SHOCK WAS TH-

FWZAAAAK

UNHHH!

NICE SHOT.

THANKS, ASH. ANY IDEA WHO THE HELL HE IS?

GOTS NONE. NOT REALLY ALL THAT MUCH WITH THE CARING, NEITHER.

DON'T SEEM LIKE HE'S GOT ANYTHING WORTHWHILE. SUIT'S KINDA TIGHT.

LET'S CHECK 'IM OVER ANYWAYS.

NO MARKS ON 'IM. WONDER WHERE I HIT HIM.

YOU DIDN'T.
I'M FAST.
REALLY FAST.
URKHHH!
DAMMIT! I KNOWED IT! I KNOWED THIS WAS--
SHUT UP.
UNFFFF!
YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED.
AND IF YOU DON'T, I SWEAR TO GOD I'LL KILL YOU.
DON'T TEST ME ON THIS. I'M NOT KIDDING.
AND IF YOU THINK I AM...
THIS IS HOW I'LL KILL YOU. WITH THESE.
I'LL CUT YOUR THROATS AND LET YOU BLEED OUT IF I EVEN THINK YOU'RE LYING.
DO WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER?
Y-YES.

NAMES.
I'M ASH. HE'S SONNER.
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?
WE'RE SCANNERS, THAT'S ALL. WE SWEARS.
WHAT ARE "SCANNERS"?
WE SCAN THE AREA, SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING WORTH BRINGING HOME.
HOME? WHERE'S HOME?
ON THE WASTES. A COUPLE MILES FROM HERE.
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF DYSTOPIA.
DYSTOPIA?
WHY DOES THAT SOUND FAMILIAR?
I'VE HEARD IT SOMEWHERE, BUT I CAN'T
YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE ME THERE.
WHY DO YA WANT T'GO *THERE?*
BECAUSE I *DO*. GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?
NO. NO PROBLEM.
TRY TO RUN, YOU WON'T GET TEN FEET.
GOOD.
YESSIR.
CAN WE...CAN WE ASK WHO YOU ARE?
YOU CAN SPEAK WHEN SPOKEN TO.
YESSIR.

I HAVE TO TRUST THEM THAT THEY'RE TAKING ME WHERE I WANT TO GO. BUT I'M REASONABLY SURE THEY ARE

THEY SEEM GENUINELY AFRAID THAT I'M GOING TO CUT THEIR THROATS IF THEY GIVE ME THE SLIGHTEST PROVOCATION.

AND HONESTLY, CONSIDERING THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT ALL THIS, I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE THEY'RE WRONG.

IT'S JUST OVER HERE.

PROMISE YOU WON'T KILL ANYBODY?

NO.

PROMISE YOU WON'T KILL US?

QUIET.

WHAT THE--?

WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

I...I DUNNO.

THERE WERE PEOPLE LIVING HERE?

FORTY, FIFTY, LIKE THAT.

WHERE ARE THEY?

THAT'S WHAT I WAS WONDERIN'.

COULD THEY BE HUNTING?

ALL OF 'EM? NOT LIKELY.

NONE OF THIS IS MAKING ANY SENSE. IT'S CONFUSION PILED ON TOP OF ABSURDITY.

I'M NO CLOSER TO FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO MY WORLD THAN--

ARRHHH!

NOW WHAT?

AW, NOT AGAIN!

HELP! HAAAAALP!

NOW WHO?!

LOOKS LIKE WE GOT A FEW STRAGGLERS.

AND WHO'S THE ONE IN THE TIGHT OUTFIT?

WHO ARE *YOU* SUPPOSED TO BE?

YOU DON'T GET TO ASK QUESTIONS. YOU GET TO SURRENDER.

NOT HAPPENING.

FINE THEN!

ZWAAAAK ZWAAAAK

ZWAAAAK ZWAAAAK ZWAAAAK

I'M REALLY STARTING TO HATE THIS WORLD

EVERYBODY KEEPS SHOOTING AT ME.

AND I'M NO CLOSER TO FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED THAN BEFORE.

NUCLEAR WEAPONRY? BUT WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE?

AND WHAT COULD HAVE TRIGGERED SUCH AN ATTACK? COUNTRIES BACKED AWAY FROM NUCLEAR WEAPONS YEARS AGO.

HOW COULD--?

UNNHH!

WHAT THE SHOCK WAS THAT?!

IT'S LIKE THE AIR EXPLODED ALL AROUND ME!

I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THAT IN MY LI-

NO, WAIT. I HAVE

OH MY GOD. I HAVE

SPIDER-MAN?

AFTER ALL THIS TIME? CAN IT TRULY BE?

NICE COSTUME, BY THE WAY.

THE MAESTRO THE FUTURE INCARNATION OF THE HULK

I RAN INTO HIM ALONGSIDE RICK JONES AND CAPTAIN MARVEL

BUT THAT WAS AN ALTERNATE FUTURE! I'M SUPPOSED TO BE IN MY OWN TIME. HOW COULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED?

MAESTRO. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

YOU KNOW MY NAME? HAVE WE MET?

HE DOESN'T REMEMBER. MAYBE IT HASN'T HAPPENED YET IN HIS WORLD

OR MAYBE THAT WAS AN ALTERNATE FUTURE OF HIM.

EVERYBODY'S HEARD OF YOU.

A CHARMING LIE. HOW DID YOU GET HERE?

TIME-TRAVELED, I ASSUME.

YES. RIGHT. TIME-TRAVELED.

AND CAN YOU TRAVEL BACK?

MAYBE.

HE THINKS I'M THE ORIGINAL SPIDER-MAN, PETER PARKER. DON'T SEE ANY NEED TO CLARIFY IT FOR HIM.

HOW CHARMING.

WE MAY BE ABLE TO DO EACH OTHER A SERVICE.

YEAH?

INDEED. WHEN YOU TRAVEL BACK...

...TAKE ME *WITH* YOU.

ABSOLUTELY.

I'LL GET RIGHT ON THAT. MY TIME MACHINE IS RIGHT BACK THERE.

WAIT HERE AND I'LL--

DO YOU THINK ME A FOOL?!

WELL, I KIND OF HOPED.

THUD

YOU WOULD NEVER AGREE SO READILY TO TAKE ME BACK UNLESS YOU WERE LYING!

I DO NOT DO WELL WITH BEING *LIED* TO!

YOU'RE STILL QUICK. I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.

BUT SOONER OR LATER, YOU HAVE TO RUN OUT OF STRENGTH. AND I NEVER--

GOD, *EVERYBODY* IN THIS WORLD JUST YAMMERS ON AND ON

UH-OH

WAS THAT INTENDED TO HURT?

WHAM

GAH!

WAKOWWWW

HE KEEPS SMASHING ME BACK AND FORTH

A DOZEN TIMES

JUST FELT A RIB BREAK

THERE GOES ANOTHER

AND THE WORST THING IS

HE'S HOLDING BACK. I KNOW HE IS

HE'S JUST SCREWING AROUND TO AMUSE HIMSELF

AND FINALLY...

...HE GETS BORED

KRAAAH

I HAD NO CHANCE. NONE.

I'VE NEVER BEEN HIT THAT HARD IN MY LIFE

MY GOD, I'M GOING TO DIE HERE

IT'S A MIRACLE EVERY BONE IN MY BODY ISN'T BROKEN.

I CAN'T MOVE. CAN BARELY BREATHE.

THIS IS HOW IT ENDS?

AFTER EVERYTHING I'VE BEEN THROUGH, ALL MY BATTLES...

...I DIE IN A WORLD THAT MAKES NO SENSE?

BRING HIM.

SO HOW DID YOU ARRIVE IN THIS TIME, ANYWAY?
WAS IT A TIME-TRAVEL DEVICE OF YOUR OWN INVENTION, OR WERE YOU SENT HERE BY AN ENEMY?
ARE YOU CONSCIOUS?
THIS CAN BE A TWO-WAY CONVERSATION, YOU KNOW. I'M SURE YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OF YOUR OWN.
Why?
WHY WHAT?
Why... everything...?
YOU MEAN WHY DID HUMANITY BLOW ITSELF TO HELL?
INTERESTING STORY, THAT.
TELL ME: DID YOU EVER HEAR OF A CORPORATION CALLED...
...ALCHEMAX?
NO. LORD NO
THEY WERE RESPONSIBLE.
A PROGRAM THEY BEGAN IN THE FIRST HALF OF THIS CENTURY WENT HORRIBLY WRONG.
ONE THING LED TO ANOTHER, NUKES FLEW, AND THAT WAS THE END OF THAT.
PERHAPS YOU'LL STILL HAVE THE CHANCE TO SEE IT.

AH, THERE IT IS. HOME SWEET HOME.

YOU'VE ANSWERED NONE OF MY QUESTIONS, BY THE WAY.

HOW 'BOUT YOU ANSWER MINE!

WHAT'D YOU DO TO OUR PEOPLE?!

ASH, SHUT UP!

TELL ME, DAMN YOU!

I WAS FEELING ARTISTIC.

WHAT?

ARTISTIC. SEIZED WITH AN ARTIST'S IMPULSE.

I NEEDED MATERIALS AND THEY PROVIDED THEM.

TURN AROUND.

OH, HOLY--!

NO! NO!

WHAT DO YOU THINK? BE CANDID NOW.

IS IT TOO MUCH? OR JUST ENOUGH?

MAESTRO

YES, YESSS. THAT'S PERFECT.

EXACTLY WHAT I WAS GOING FOR.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INPUT.

KRUNCH

KRUNCH

IT'S INTERESTING THAT YOU WOULD COME ALONG AT THIS POINT IN TIME, SPIDER-MAN.

MY INTEREST IN ALTERNATE WORLDS HAS ENABLED ME TO CAPTURE ANOTHER INDIVIDUAL WHO COULD BE OF USE.

SHE HAS THUS FAR PROVEN STUBBORN.

I'M HOPING THAT PROLONGED EXPOSURE TO YOU...

...AND, MORE SPECIFICALLY, WHAT I'VE DONE TO YOU...

...WILL MAKE HER MORE COOPERATIVE.

I SUPPOSE WE'LL SEE.

THOOOM

IT'S YOU. I DON'T BELIEVE IT.

You...know me? From where...do you...

Aw no...

STRANGE.

NICE TO BE REMEMBERED.

SPIDER-MAN 2099 #10

The Year 2099.
MAESTRO'S PALACE.
MAESTRO! MAESTRO, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
IS THERE A PROBLEM, MINISTER?
YOU HAVE CAPTURED SPIDER-MAN!
I HAVE.
AND YOU PLACED HIM IN A CELL WITH STRANGE!
CORRECT AGAIN.
IS HE BOUND, AT LEAST?
NO, HIS HANDS ARE FREE.
MAESTRO, YOU KNOW I HAVE ALL RESPECT FOR YOU IN THE WORLD, BUT I MUST ASK...
HAVE I LOST MY MIND?
THE THOUGHT DID OCCUR TO ME.
AGAIN, WITH ALL RESPECT.
I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.
BUT SIR--!

SIR, I FAIL TO UNDERSTAND WHY EXACTLY YOU WOULD--

APPARENTLY I AM NOT MAKING IT CLEAR TO YOU, MINISTER.

YOUR CONFUSION DOES NOT INTEREST ME.

NOR, FRANKLY, DOES THIS WORLD THAT I RULE OVER. I HAVE ACCOMPLISHED ALL THAT IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.

I WANT MORE.

AND I WILL FIND IT.

NOW, LADIES...

...WHERE WERE WE?

CAN'T MOVE... CAN BARELY BREATHE...

S-MAN. YOU OKAY?

GREEEEAAATT...

NO. YOU'RE NOT.

I THINK...

I THINK I'M DYING.

VISION'S BLURRY... CRAP IN MY LUNGS...

MAESTRO BUSTED ME UP...PRETTY BAD...

CAN YOU GET OVER HERE?

THE BINDERS THEY HAVE ON ME PREVENT ME FROM PROJECTING MY POWERS...

BUT IF YOU GET WITHIN THE CIRCLE, I CAN HELP.

HOLD ON. BE RIGHT...

...there...

WHUMP

THIS SHOULDN'T BE HERE. NONE OF THIS SHOULD.

I KNOW.

YOU DO?

I'M THE SORCERESS SUPREME, S-MAN. YOU THINK I'M UNAWARE WHEN THE WORLD HAS CHANGED AROUND ME?

WHY DIDN'T YOU CHANGE?

I NEVER DO. PART OF THE ENTIRE SORCERESS GIG.

I'D EXPLAIN IT BUT I'D NEED CHARTS AND GRAPHS AND MAYBE AN EASEL.

YOU'RE HILARIOUS. GOOD THING I'M DYING SO I WON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO THIS MUCH LONGER.

FIRE YOUR WEBBING.

WHAT?

FIRE A LINE AT ME.

FWIIZZ

PERFECT. NOW HOLD ON.

FOR ABOUT HALF A SECOND I'M ABLE TO LIFT MY HEAD. AND I SEE, INSIDE THE HOLE

ACTUALLY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL I'M SEEING

WHAT ARE THOSE CUFFS... PREVENTING YOU FROM DOING?

ESCAPING, MOSTLY.

HOPING YOU CAN HELP WITH THAT.

HOLD ON.

THIS MIGHT STING A LITTLE.

ARRRRRRHHHHHH

OR A LOT.

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON IN HERE?!

WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM?

ANSWER ME! WHAT DID YOU DO TO--?

WAAAAAM

OOOOOFFFF!

SHE PATCHED ME UP.

KRUUNK

HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY KEYS.

SHAME. THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN CONVENIENT.

I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS TIME. BACK TO 2015 AND FIX THIS, SOMEHOW.

THERE IS A MEANS BY WHICH YOU CAN TRAVEL THERE. THE MAESTRO HAS A *TIME MACHINE*, BUT HE CAN'T OPERATE IT.

IT WAS CREATED BY SOMEONE ELSE. HE KEEPS IT SECURED.

CAN YOU GET ME TO IT?

IF YOU CAN GET RID OF THE SYMBOLS ON THESE CUFFS, YES.

THEY'RE WHAT'S KEEPING ME HERE.

THAT SHOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM. HOLD ON.

IS THAT ENOUGH?

SHRACK!

SHRACK!

MORE THAN.

DID IT! THANK AGAMOTTO!

WHERE'S THIS TIME MACHINE OF HIS?

DOWN IN WHAT HE CALLS HIS TROPHY ROOM.

BUT IT'S NONFUNCTIONAL. HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO OPERATE IT.

MY SPECIALTY'S BIOLOGY, NOT TECH. BUT I CAN TAKE A LOOK AT IT.

HE HAS A GOOD DEAL OF OTHER TECHNOLOGY DOWN THERE. MAYBE SOME OF IT MIGHT BE OF HELP.

WORTH A TRY.

IT'S THIS WAY.

LEAD ON.

NOW WE JUST HOPE THAT WE DON'T RUN INTO ANY OF THE MAESTRO'S--

--GUARDS.

FIGURES.

FINE. LET'S GET THIS DONE

WE NEED TO DO THIS QUICK AND FAST CAN'T LET THEM SEND UP AN ALARM

THWIP!

GOT TO KEEP MOVING

GABRIEL, MY MOTHER *EVERYONE* IN 2099 IS COUNTING ON ME TO GO BACK AND FIX THIS MESS

I *CAN'T* LET THEM DOWN

THESE ARE THE LAST TWO. I DON'T THINK THEY'RE GONNA BE MUCH TROUBLE.

ИДАМ

DOWN THIS WAY AND TO THE RIGHT.

OH DEAR.

HOLY SHOCK.

I TOLD YOU.

IT'S VARIOUS RELICS FROM HEROES THAT THE MAESTRO DEFEATED OVER THE YEARS. THOSE WHO SURVIVED THE CATASTROPHE IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY, IN ANY EVENT.

HERE. IT'S OVER IN THE CORNER.

WHAT IS?

THE TIME MACHINE.

THIS PLATFORM IS A TIME MACHINE?

IT WAS CREATED BY DOCTOR DOOM.

DOOM? HOW THE SHOCK DID HE CREATE IT?

NO ONE KNOWS.

HOW DO YOU TURN IT ON?

THAT IS THE MYSTERY.

THE MAESTRO HAS BEEN UNABLE TO DO SO.

THIS IS THE DEVICE THAT ACTIVATES IT. BUT THE MAESTRO HAS NOT DETERMINED THE SOURCE OR HOW TO MANIPULATE IT.

THEN AGAIN, HE HAS HAD OTHER THINGS ON HIS MIND.

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

FIX IT.

HOW?

I DON'T KNOW! MY SPECIALTY IS MYSTICISM, NOT MACHINERY!

LOOK, THE MAESTRO IS REALLY BRUCE BANNER. A SCIENTIST WHO *BUILDS BOMBS*. HE'D HAVE MORE LUCK WITH THIS THAN I DO.

HE DOESN'T LIKE TO DWELL ON WHO HE WAS. HE HAS BUILT NOTHING IN DECADES.

FANTASTIC. THAT'S...

...THAT'S...

S-MAN? DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING?

YOU HAVE SOMETHING, DON'T YOU?

GET ME THOSE PIECES OF... WHAT IS THAT? ARMOR?

IRON MAN'S, YES.

GET IT OVER HERE. RIGHT NOW.

ARE YOU GETTING SOME IDEAS?

THESE LOOK LIKE POWER SOURCES. AND INCREDIBLY, THEY'RE STILL FUNCTIONING.

I NEED SOME WIRES.

I THINK I SAW SOME OVER THERE.

THIS MIGHT WORK. I'LL BE DAMNED, THIS MIGHT WORK.

I STILL THINK IT'S WEIRD THAT THE MAESTRO DIDN'T COME UP WITH THIS ALREADY, BUT MAYBE STRANGE IS RIGHT.

MAYBE HIS MIND SIMPLY DOESN'T WORK LIKE THAT ANYMORE.

NOW WE JUST GOTTA HOPE THAT I CAN PULL THIS OFF BEFORE HE GETS NOSTALGIC AND DECIDES TO COME DOWN HERE FOR A VISIT.

STRANGE MAY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO HEAL THE INJURIES I SUSTAINED, BUT I DOUBT SHE CAN HELP IF HE TEARS ME IN HALF.

WORK QUICKLY. I HAVE NO MORE LOVE FOR THIS TIME THAN YOU DO.

IF YOU'RE JUMPING BACK IN TIME, I'M GOING WITH YOU.

WELCOME ABOARD.

I THINK I'VE GOT IT.

SERIOUSLY?

SERIOUSLY. SHOULD JUST TAKE A MINUTE TO FIRE IT UP.

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! THIS IS--

URRKKHH!

WHA--?

GGKKHHHHH

STRANGE! WHAT'S WRONG?!

STRANGE! MY GOD!

EVERYTHING SCREECHES TO A HALT IN MY HEAD. SHE'S...SHE'S DEAD. HOW COULD SHE BE DEAD?

WHAT COULD HAVE KILLED HER? THIS IS INSANE! THIS IS--!

HELLO, SPIDER-MAN.

EVER HEAR OF *THE HOOD?* I DOUBT YOU WOULD HAVE.

A TWO-BIT CRIMINAL FROM THE EARLY PART OF THE 21ST CENTURY. LONG FORGOTTEN.

HE HAD A RATHER IMPRESSIVE CLOAK OF INVISIBILITY, THOUGH.

NOW THIS: THIS IS A SOUL DAGGER. I'D RATHER HAVE A SOUL *SWORD*, BUT THIS WILL DO.

CHARMING, ISN'T IT?

NYARRRRRHHH!

EH?

FWZZZ

GIVE ME THAT, YOU BRAINLESS FOO--

SHRACK

ARRRHHH!

UNFFFF!

PERFECT!

NO! NO!

NOOOO!

I DID IT. I DID IT! HOLY SHOCK. I DID IT!

THE REMOTE CONTROL. WHERE IS IT? I WAS HOLDING IT, AND NOW IT'S GONE.

HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?

DAMN IT. IT MUST BE CHRONALLY LINKED TO THE PLATFORM. IT STAYS WHEREVER THE PLATFORM IS.

AND IT'S BACK IN 2099. ALL IT DID WAS SEND ME HERE.

DID I KILL THE MAESTRO? I'M PRETTY SURE I PUT HIM DOWN WITH IRON MAN'S GAUNTLET...

...BUT IT'S HARD TO BE CERTAIN.

BETTER PRAY I DID. THE LAST THING I NEED IS FOR HIM TO FIND A WAY TO COME BACK HERE.

TALK ABOUT YOUR WORST CASE SCENARIO.

GET UP. HE'S GONE.

GOOD. WOULDN'T WANT TO RUIN THE SURPRISE.

AND YOU PUT ON QUITE THE SHOW.

DYING FROM A FAKE SOUL DAGGER? IT WASN'T THAT HARD.

HOW IS YOUR HOST DOING? STILL FIRMLY IN HAND?

OH YES. SHE IS SOLIDLY UNDER MY THUMB.

BELIEVE ME, MAESTRO...

SHE WON'T BE BREAKING FREE ANYTIME SOON. AND AS YOU SEE, MY SIMPLE GLAMOUR FOOLED SPIDER-MAN EASILY ENOUGH.

NOW THEN... SHALL WE COMPLETE THE PLAN?

BY ALL MEANS.

HEH HEH HEH.
NEW MEXICO. HOW LITTLE YOU'VE CHANGED.

ALBUQUERQUE TRIBUNE
DECEMBER 25.
MERRY CHRISTMAS.

AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

When the Multiverse was temporarily destroyed during the events of *Secret Wars*, Doctor Doom bound the small scraps of what remained into a single planet that he named Battleworld. In this new reality, a variant version of the Maestro ruled the Battleworld domain of Dystopia.

FUTURE IMPERFECT #1

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NOW, ALL THAT REMAINS...IS **BATTLEWORLD!**

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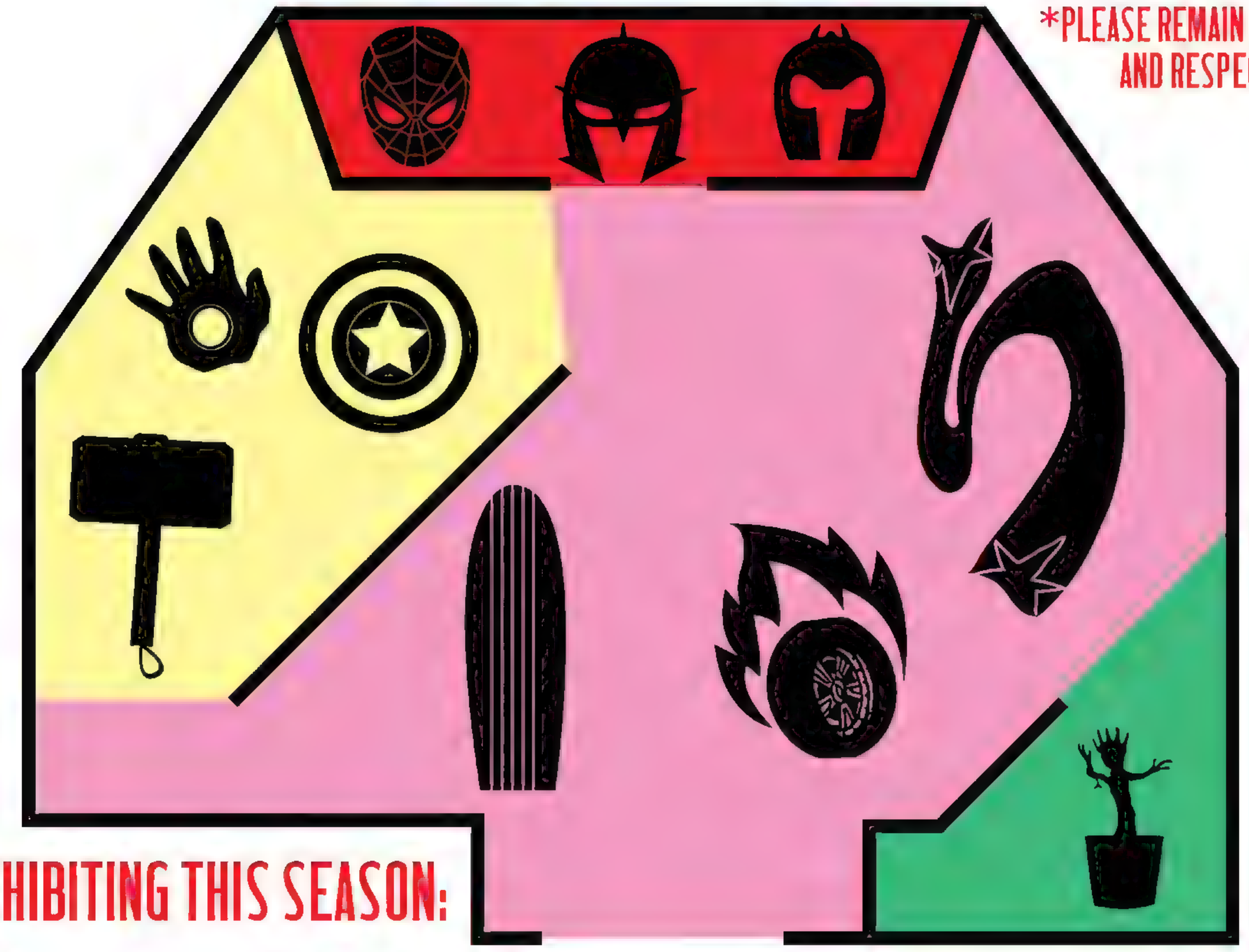
EACH DOMAIN RULED BY POWERFUL BARONS, BUT NONE MORE TIGHTLY CONDUCTED THAN...

OUR EXALTED BARON, THE MAESTRO, WELCOMES YOU TO HIS TROPHY ROOM OF CONQUERED OPPONENTS.

*PLEASE REMAIN QUIET AND RESPECTFUL



EXHIBITING THIS SEASON:

- BABY GROOT POTTED PLANT
- CAPTAIN AMERICA'S SHIELD
- HELL CHARGER TIRE
- IRON MAN REPULSOR GLOVE
- MAGNETO HELMET
- MS MARVEL'S SCARF
- NOVA HELMET
- SILVER SURFER BOARD
- SPIDER-MAN MASK
- THOR HAMMER

THERE WERE HEROES ONCE, SO I'M TOLD.

AT LEAST THOSE WERE THE LEGENDS THAT WERE HANDED DOWN TO US.

ALONG WITH THE LEGENDS OF GREAT GODS WHO LIVED ON HIGH AND WATCHED OVER US.

OR USED US FOR SPORT, TO BET ON US OR MATE WITH US OR WHATEVER OCCURRED TO THEM.

ANYWAY...

THE MYTHS GO THAT ONCE UPON A TIME, GREAT HEROES WALKED THE EARTH.

AND FOUGHT FOR US AND CHAMPIONED US.

AND SOMETIMES EVEN TEAMED WITH EACH OTHER TO UNITE THEIR POWER.

THOSE WERE GOOD DAYS. GLORIOUS DAYS.

BUT, LIKE ALL MYTHS, THEY DIDN'T HAPPEN.

future imperfect

TODAY IS WHAT IT IS, AND THERE ARE NO HEROES ANYMORE, IF THERE EVER WERE.

THERE ARE JUST SURVIVORS.

IS THAT...?

I'LL BE DAMNED.

WHAT IN THE HELL IS HE DOING OUT HERE?

HOLD ON! HELP IS COMING!

FIRST WE SEE IF HE'S ALIVE. IF HE IS, I DO WHAT I CAN.

IF HE ISN'T, I STRIP HIM AND SEE IF HE'S GOT ANYTHING USEFUL.

WHO... WHO ARE YOU?

NAME'S RUBY. DON'T STRAIN YOURSELF.

WHO ARE YOU?

ONCE UPON A TIME...

THEY CALLED ME ODIN.

"ODIN." LEGEND SAYS THAT'S THE NAME OF THE KING OF THE GODS.

NEVER MET ONE *IN PERSON*, THOUGH.

NOW YOU HAVE.

HERE. DRINK.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE ANYWAY?

DYSTOPIA IS MILES IN THE OTHER DIRECTION.

THAT IS SOMEWHAT THE POINT.

I WISHED TO BE QUIT OF IT, AND OF THE MAESTRO.

YES, WELL, SO DO A LOT OF PEOPLE.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE?

I COME OUT HERE TO THINK. BLOW OFF STEAM. PLAN.

PLAN? WHAT SORT OF PLAN?

DO YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW?

YES.

NO. I MEAN DO YOU *REALLY* WANT TO KNOW?

YES.

OKAY, THEN.

THIS... THIS ISN'T NECESSARY.

I THINK IT IS.

YOUR SKIN IS...*AMAZING.* WHAT IS IT MADE OF?

RUBY QUARTZ. ACTUALLY, THAT'S MY NAME: RUBY.

HOW IS IT POSSIBLE?

I'M A MUTANT. DO YOU HAVE PROBLEMS WITH MUTANTS?

THE ONLY ONE I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH IS THE MAESTRO.

YOU'VE HEARD OF HIM, I ASSUME.

EVERYONE'S HEARD OF HIM.

OUR LORD BARON, SO DESIGNATED BY DOOM HIMSELF.

WHO LIVES IN THE SO-CALLED CASTLE OF GREEN...

AND RULES OUR ONE CITY, DYSTOPIA, WITH AN IRON FIST.

OH YES, I KNOW THE MAESTRO RIGHT ENOUGH.

AND ME AND MY FRIENDS...

WE'RE PLANNING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT HIM.

SO WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

YOU WOULD NOT... BELIEVE ME.

TRY ME.

ONCE...

ONCE I TRULY *WAS* ODIN. THE RULER OF ASGARD.

GET OUT.

I SPEAK THE TRUTH. ONCE I RULED THE GODS. ONCE...

THOR WAS MY SON.

THOR? YOU MEAN *THORS?* DOOM'S ARMY?

THEY WERE NOT ALWAYS SO. BUT MY POWER WAS STOLEN FROM ME, AND NOW...

NOW I AM A SHADOW OF MY FORMER SELF.

"WELL, WE'LL SEE WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT THAT.

"AS SOON AS WE GET YOU...

"...TO DYSTOPIA."

I'LL GIVE YOU TWO FOR ONE.

DO YOU HAVE IT IN EXTRA LARGE?

WHAT'S THE PRICE ON THAT?

MY MATE WOULD LOVE THIS!

YOU SAID YOU'D BE GETTING IN MORE THIS WEEK!

I HAPPEN TO BE A CLOSE FRIEND TO THE MAESTRO.

YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS.

I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO TAKE MY BUSINESS ELSEWHERE.

SCOOTER, WHERE THE FLARK DID RUBY GET OFF TO?

YOU SCAN HER, JANIS. SHE JUST HAD TO GET OFF ON HER OWN FOR A BIT AGAIN.

FANTASTIC.

WE'RE BUSY TRYING TO TAKE CARE OF A WHOLE COMMUNITY OF ESCAPEES FROM THE MAESTRO'S *"ATTENTIONS"*...

AND SHE'S OFF WANDERING BY HERSELF. THAT'S PERFECT. THAT'S...

PSSSSTT

WANT TO KEEP COMPLAINING ABOUT ME OR DO YOU WANT TO HELP?

GOT SOMEONE MAJOR HERE.

MAJOR?

THIS GUY IS ODIN.

ODIN? LIKE THE NORSE GOD?

NOT LIKE. *THE.*

ARE YOU RIFFING ME? YOU'RE RIFFING ME, AREN'T YOU?

THIS GUY IS THE FATHER OF THOR? THE THORS?

THAT'S WHAT HE TOLD ME ON THE WAY HERE.

IT IS A...LONG STORY.

LET'S GET HIM TO THE HIDEAWAY.

BECAUSE IF THIS GUY IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS...

...THE BOSS IS *DEFINITELY* GONNA WANNA MEET HIM.

THAT'S WHAT I WAS THINKING.

THE BOSS?

THE GUY WHO RUNS OUR REVOLT.

I WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO SEE HIM.

IT'LL BE GREAT. TRUST US.

HOW FAR DOWN DOES THIS GO?

ALL THE WAY.

DID YOU BUILD IT?

SOME. MOST OF IT ALREADY EXISTED WHEN WE FOUND IT.

THIS WAY.

AND WHO ARE YOU, JANIS? ARE YOU A LEADER AS WELL?

YOU KNOW, FOR AN OLD NORSE GOD, YOU ASK A LOT OF QUESTIONS.

I DID NOT MEAN TO BE IMPERTINENT.

THIS IS...MOST IMPRESSIVE.

THESE ARE PEOPLE WHO WERE REJECTED BY ABOVE. THE MAESTRO, SEEMS HE'S GOT STANDARDS FOR THE QUALITY OF HIS CITIZENS.

IF IT WEREN'T FOR US, THEY'D BE FORCED TO LIVE OUT IN GREENLAND. AND *NO ONE* SHOULD HAVE TO LIVE THERE.

INDEED.

SLIDER! FRONT AND CENTER!

SLIDER?

SHE'S GOTTA SCAN YOU.

I AM NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND...

JUST ROUTINE SECURITY.

SLIDER'S GONNA SCAN YOUR THOUGHTS. JUST SURFACE.

MAKE SURE YOU WON'T TRY TO HURT US.

THAT HARDLY SEEMS NECESSARY.

WON'T TAKE BUT A MO'.

SEE? EASY AS--

AAAAAAAHHHH!!!

SLIDER!

NO! NO!!!

SLIDER, GRIP IT! WHAT'S GOING--?

HE'LL KILL US ALL!

KILL US ALL!

WELL, WELL. SO YOU DO HAVE SECURITY.

A BIT LATE, BUT--

NYAAAAAAH!!!

HE'S NOT ODIN.

no. I'm not.

MY NAME IS ACTUALLY ROBERT BRUCE BANNER.

ALTHOUGH NOWADAYS...

I AM TYPICALLY CALLED THE MAESTRO.

FALL BACK! EVERYBODY FALL BACK!

RUBY--!

DON'T WORRY...

I GOT HIM.

KRAAK

IS THAT THE *BEST* YOU HAVE?

UNDERSTAND, I COULD HAVE MY GRAVITY POLICE DOWN HERE...

...MY PERSONAL SOLDIERS...EVEN SOME DOGS OF WAR...

BUT I'VE NO DESIRE TO WASTE THEIR TIME IF THEY WON'T BE REQUIRED.

AHHHHAAAAAAAA

AH, RUBY SUMMERS. TRYING TO STOP ME WITH YOUR OPTIC BLASTS AGAIN? YOU NEED MORE TRICKS IN YOUR ARSENAL.

HERE IS THE PROBLEM, WOMAN: YOU MADE YOURSELF TOO PREDICTABLE.

YOUR PERIODIC TRIPS INTO THE DESERT GOT NOTICED.

SO I SIMPLY LAY IN WAIT FOR YOU...

...AND YOU BEHAVED EXACTLY AS I THOUGHT YOU WOULD.

DID YOU *TRULY* THINK WE DIDN'T KNOW WHO YOU WERE?

WEREN'T OBSERVING YOU?

WEREN'T AWARE OF YOUR *LIMITS?*

SUCH AS THAT YOU NEED TIME TO RECHARGE YOUR BLASTS?

SO...YOUR BODY IS RUBY QUARTZ, *EH?*

FUNNY THING ABOUT RUBY QUARTZ...

IT'S BREAKABLE.

WHAAM!

MY. YOU'RE DURABLE.

STILL... I'VE SHATTERED DIAMOND IN MY TIME.

SO I'M THINKING RUBY QUARTZ SHOULDN'T PRESENT AN INSURMOUNTABLE PROBLEM.

CHK

CHK

CHK

YES. THERRRRRE WE GO.

YOU WERE QUITE THE OPPONENT, RUBY. YOU GAVE ME TWO, PERHAPS *THREE* SECONDS OF CONCERN.

THAT IS TWICE WHAT I TYPICALLY ENCOUNTER.

ZWAOWW

TAKE HIM DOWN!

IF WE CAN BRING DOWN THE MAESTRO, WE CAN FREE DYSTOPIA FROM HIM.

I WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO SEE THAT.

TRULY. TRY TO DESTROY ME. ***SUCCEED*** IF YOU CAN.

DO YOU THINK I ***ENJOY*** THE LIFE I LEAD? DEALING WITH THE IDIOTS OF THIS CITY EVERY DAY.

RENDERING DECISIONS ON VARIOUS DISPUTES.

WORKING WITH FARMERS TO KEEP EVERYONE FED ON LAND THAT HAS NO INTEREST IN GROWING FOOD.

DO YOU NOT BELIEVE THAT, IF I COULD IMPROVE MATTERS, I ***WOULDN'T?*** THAT I WOULD NOT HAPPILY TURN POWER OVER TO YOU AND WALK AWAY INTO THE--

HA-HA-HA-

THOOOOOOM!

UNFFFFF!

AHHHHH!

CAN'T... CAN'T END LIKE THIS...

CRUNCH

AW, WOULD'JA JUST SHADDUP ALREADY?

BOSS!

WELL, WELL. YOU.

I'M AFRAID THAT IT CAN.

GOOD-BYE, JANIS. YOU AND YOUR REBELS PROVIDED ME SOME DIVERSION, AND THAT IS ENOUGH--

ME.

FUTURE IMPERFECT #2

THE MULTIVERSE WAS DESTROYED!

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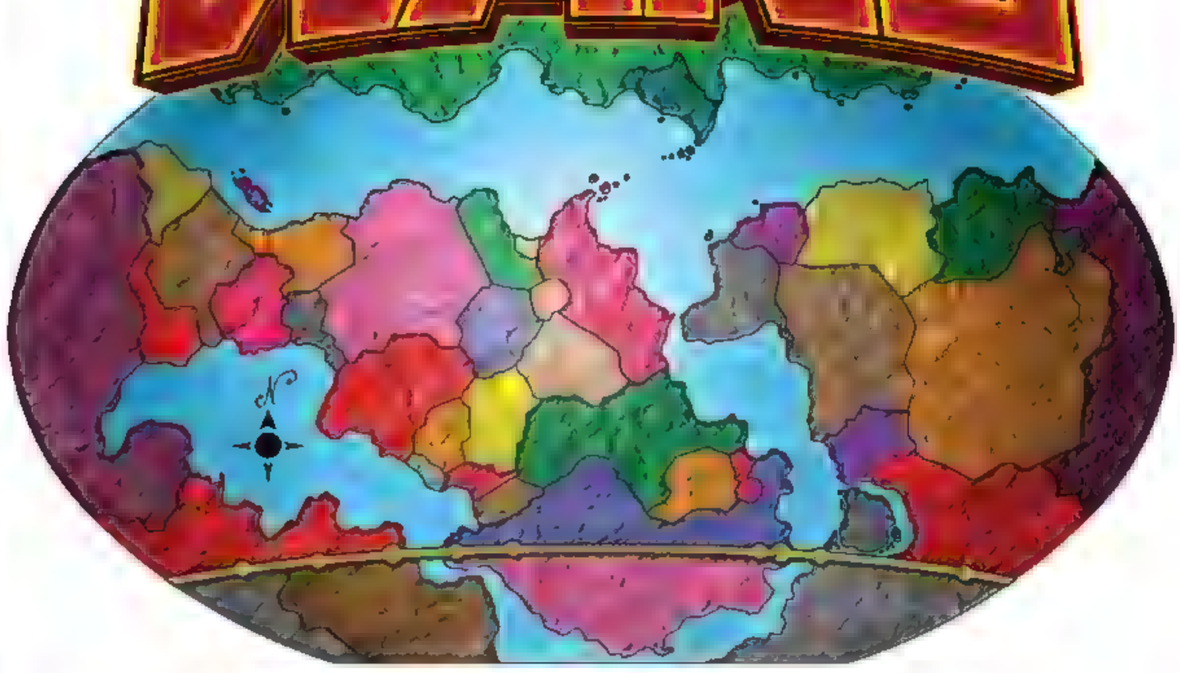
NOW, ALL THAT REMAINS...IS **BATTLEWORLD!**

A MASSIVE, PATCHWORK PLANET COMPOSED OF THE FRAGMENTS OF WORLDS THAT NO LONGER EXIST, MAINTAINED BY THE IRON WILL OF ITS GOD AND MASTER, VICTOR VON DOOM!

EACH DOMAIN RULED BY POWERFUL BARONS, BUT NONE MORE TIGHTLY CONDUCTED THAN...

SECRET WARS



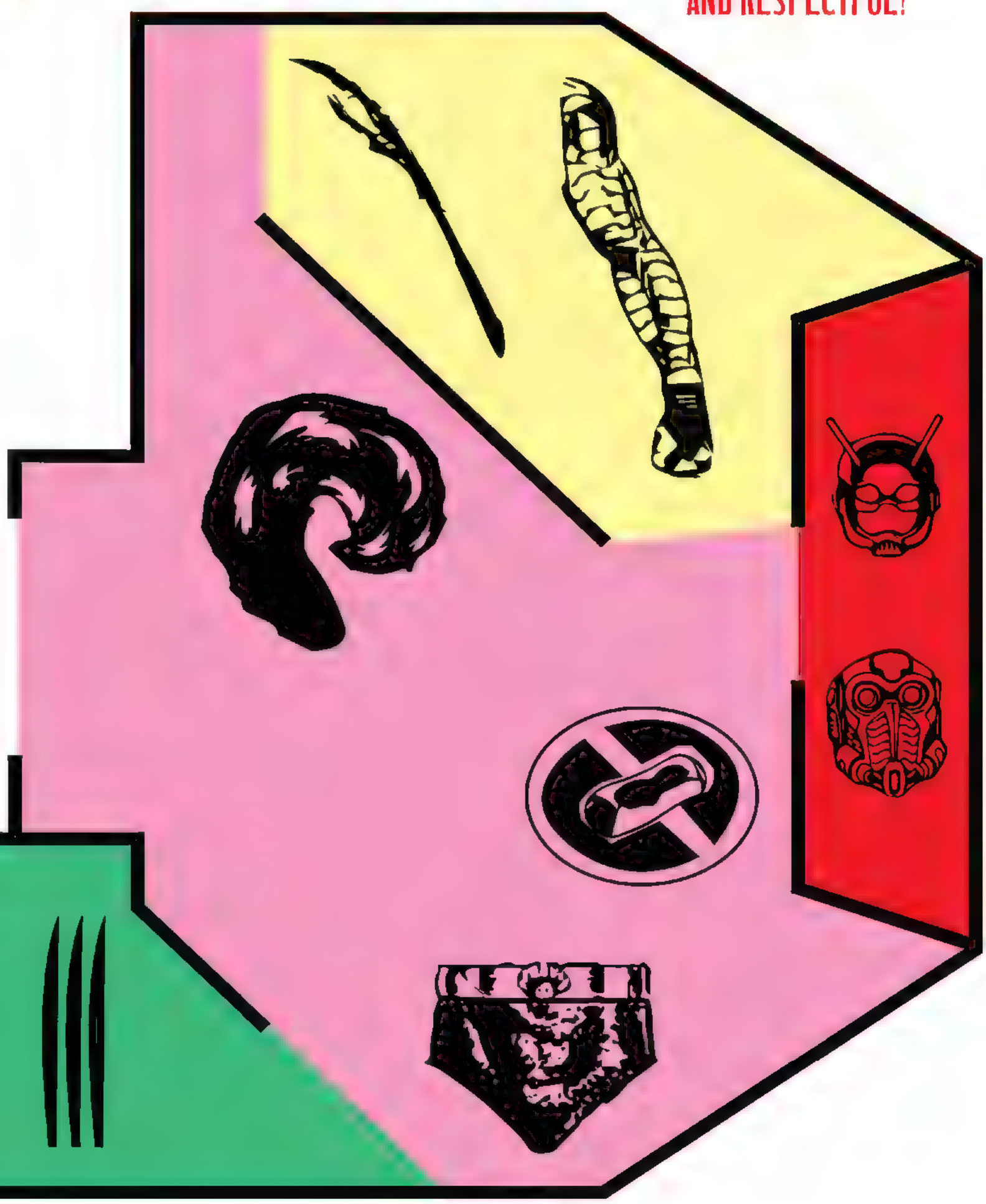
OUR EXALTED BARON, THE MAESTRO, WELCOMES YOU TO HIS TROPHY ROOM OF CONQUERED OPPONENTS.

EXHIBITING THIS SEASON:

- ELEKTRA SAI
- LOKI SCEPTER
- WINTER SOLDIER ARM
- STAR-LORD FACE MASK
- ANT-MAN HELMET
- SQUIRREL GIRL TAIL
- WOLVERINE CLAWS
- MAGIK SWORD
- DEADPOOL CHIMICHANGA
- NAMOR TRUNKS

EAST WING

*PLEASE REMAIN QUIET AND RESPECTFUL!



KEEP IT STEADY, THADDEUS!
KEEP IT STEADY!
OF COURSE I'M GOING TO KEEP IT STEADY, TALBOT.
AND NEED I REMIND YOU, WE AREN'T ON A FIRST NAME BASIS.
THAT'S "MAJOR" ROSS.
DIDN'T MEAN TO OFFEND, MAJOR.
NO OFFENSE TAKEN. BOTTOM LINE IS, THE ONLY THING I CARE ABOUT IS BEATING THE RUSSKIES TO SPACE.
AND IF YOU'RE GOING TO GET IT DONE BEFORE THE AIR FORCE, THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.
HANG ON, TALBOT! THESE ARE THE COSMIC RAYS I WARNED YOU ABOUT!
I CAN'T KEEP IT STEADY!
YOU HAVE TO--
I CAN'T!

KAVLAAAAM

T-TALBOT?

TALBOT... WHERE ARE YOU?

TALBOT! ARE YOU OKAY?!

I TRIED TO BRING IT DOWN BEST I COULD! I TRIED TO--

OH MY GOD.

OH...MY... GOD.

NYAAARRRHHH!!

WHAT'S...WHAT'S HAPPENING...?

WHAT...

...THE HELL...

...IS HAPPENING?!

UP HERE! FIVE HUNDRED FEET AWAY, GIVE OR TAKE!

BE READY FOR ANY--

THING?!

HOLY CRAP!!!

IT'S AN ALIEN! SOME SORT OF ALIEN THING!

HUH?

KILL IT!!!

STOPPP! WHAT'RE YOU--?!

WHAT... AM *I*?

NOOOO!!

NOOOOOO!!

NO!

YES.

AFTER ALL THIS TIME. STILL SUCKING OXYGEN, ROSS?

AFRAID SO.

IT'S BEEN TOO LONG.

YES, IT HAS.

IS THIS THE BEST YOU HAVE?

IT'S THE BEST ANYONE HAS.

IT LOOKS LIKE IT HARDLY HAS ANY JUICE IN IT!

I DUNNO WHAT TO TELL YOU, LADY. ORANGE IS ORANGE--

UNNHHH!!!

OOOOOOFFF!

EVERYBODY! GET OUT OF HERE!

YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED, ROSS.

STILL WORRYING ABOUT EVERYONE BUT YOURSELF.

THIS TIME IS GOING TO COST YOU.

WE NEED TO BUY THE BOSS AS MUCH TIME AS WE CAN SO SKOOTER CAN RELOCATE THE REST!

I SCAN THAT.

DO YOU THINK HE CAN TAKE THE MAESTRO ONE-ON-ONE?

I SURE AS SHOCK *HOPE* SO.

YOU'RE GETTING *OLD*, ROSS. SLOWING DOWN.

IN THE OLD DAYS, YOU COULD'VE MADE A FIGHT OF THIS.

STILL NOT A PROBLEM.

SEEMS TO ME YOU'RE THE ONE SHOWING HIS AGE.

OOOFFF!

FROM ABOVE I HEAR PEOPLE SCREAMING. SOUNDS LIKE A BUILDING COLLAPSING.

THERE'S NOTHING JANIS AND I CAN DO ABOUT IT. WE'RE STILL TOO FAR AWAY.

AT THIS POINT IT'S ALL UP TO THE BOSS.

PEOPLE JUST DIED, ROSS. THE PEOPLE IN THIS BUILDING WERE JUST CRUSHED TO DEATH.

DOESN'T THAT BOTHER YOU AT ALL?

I COULDN'T GIVE A DAMN.

IF OUR LITTLE FIGHT DESTROYS EVERYONE AROUND US, IT WOULDN'T BOTHER ME IN THE SLIGHTEST.

ALL THAT MATTERS IS KILLING YOU.

THEN BY ALL MEANS...

LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT!

BRING IT ON!

WHEN THEY COLLIDE, IT MAKES A SOUND LIKE THUNDER EXPLODING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MARKET.

I HAVE NO IDEA HOW FAR IT CARRIES, BUT IT MAKES MY OWN RUBY SKIN RATTLE IN RESPONSE.

WELL ENDURED, ROSS. WELL ENDURED...

BUT ULTIMATELY FUTILE.

WAAAM

TRYING TO STAND AGAIN? SERIOUSLY?

YOU'RE WASTING *BOTH* OUR TIME.

UNFFF!

GET THE BOSS! HURRY! I'LL HOLD HIM BACK!

NO. YOU WON'T.

YOU MIGHT HAVE SLOWED ME EARLIER, BUT THAT WAS THEN.

I'VE GOTTEN ANGRIER SINCE THAT POINT.

AND THE MADDER I GET...

...THE STRONGER I GET.

WHICH MEANS THAT YOUR POWER BLAST WON'T SLOW ME AT ALL THIS TIME.

EH?

I'VE GOT HER!!!

TAKE CARE OF THE THING, SIRE! THIS ONE IS ATTENDED TO!

OH NO YOU DON'T!

FORGET ABOUT ME?

THAT'S A DANGEROUS THING TO DO!

NO.

IT'S NOT.

WHOOO

OH, GOOD. THE CAVALRY.

GET A CART. STRAP HIM IN AND BRING HIM BACK TO THE CASTLE.

WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS, SIRE?

GOOD QUESTION.

THE DOG'S RIDER SEEMED TO BELIEVE HE HAD A HANDLE ON THE SITUATION.

EITHER HE DID OR HE DIDN'T.

IT DOESN'T MATTER. ROSS WAS THEIR HEAD.

WITH HIM CUT OFF, THE REST OF THE SNAKE WILL DIE.

HE SHOULD BE OUT FOR SOME HOURS. YOU HAVE TIME.

AND WHEN HE COMES TO...

THAT'S WHEN MATTERS WILL GET *INTERESTING*.

GOT TO GET CLEAR OF THIS THING...

GOT TO--

WHAT THE--?

WHY... WHY DID--?

CALM DOWN. JUST LISTEN TO--

GOT YOU!

WAIT! HOLD--

UNFFFF!

JANIS, HOLD IT!
HUH?
HE LET ME GO!
WHAT? WHY?
BECAUSE I'M ON YOUR SIDE.
THAT'S RIDICULOUS.
NO, IT'S REALLY NOT.
WHY WOULD YOU BE ON MY SIDE?
BECAUSE A HANDFUL OF US ARE. WE WORK IN THE PALACE, FOR THE MAESTRO.
WE'D LIKE TO SEE HIM GONE AND WE'RE HOPING YOU CAN HELP.
MY NAME'S LAYLA. LAYLA MILLER.
AND BY THE WAY, STOP SAYING "*HE.*" I'M A GIRL.

COMFORTABLE, ROSS?

BE MORE COMFORTABLE IF I COULD GET MY HANDS ON YOUR THROAT.

NOW NOW. THAT SHOULDN'T BE YOUR ATTITUDE.

IT'S ABOUT TIME WE SET ASIDE OUR DIFFERENCES.

WHY WOULD WE DO THAT?

BECAUSE WE BOTH WANT THE SAME THING.

YOU WANT ME OUT OF DYSTOPIA AND I WANT TO GET OUT.

YEAH? AND WHERE WOULD YOU GO?

THE PALACE OF DOOM.

I WANT TO KILL HIM AND TAKE OVER.

CARE TO HELP?

TELL ME MORE.

LAND

FUTURE IMPERFECT #3

I DON'T TRUST HER.

SKOOTER, WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS.

NOT CARING.

SKOOTER, LISTEN--

WHY SHOULD I LISTEN TO YOU, RUBY? YOU GOT ZERO CRED WITH ME!

YOU LED THE MAESTRO RIGHT TO US! *RIGHT TO US!*

I THOUGHT HE WAS ODIN...

WELL, YOU THOUGHT *WRONG*, DIDN'T'CHA?!

AND NOW HE'S GOT MAJOR ROSS LOCKED UP AND DOING WHO-KNOWS-WHAT TO 'IM! THAT'S ASSUMING THAT HE'S EVEN STILL ALIVE!

AND NOW YOU WANT US TO TRUST ONE OF HIS DOGS OF WAR TO LEAD A TROOP RIGHT INTO THE MAESTRO'S LAP?

I KNOW IT SOUNDS CRAZY...

NOT SOUNDS! *IS!* CRAZY!

I JUST GOT DONE RELOCATING ALL THE PEOPLE WE GOT STASHED UNDERNEATH! AND NOW WE'RE SUPPOSED TO JUST MARCH RIGHT INTO THE MAESTRO'S HOUSE? UNDER HER GUIDANCE?

WHY?

BECAUSE I'M ALL YOU'VE GOT.

JANIS?

LAYLA SAVED RUBY WHEN SHE DIDN'T HAVE TO, SKOOTER.

I'M GETTING A SOLID VIBE OFF HER.

AND BESIDES, SHE'S RIGHT. WE DON'T HAVE A CHOICE. NOT IF WE WANT TO SPRING THE BOSS.

SIIIIIGH

I'M GONNA REGRET THIS, BUT OKAY. I'LL GATHER A GROUP OF OUR BEST GUNS.

SO WHAT'S THE PLAN?

THERE'S A BACK ENTRANCE TO THE CASTLE. IT'S USED TO DUMP OUT THE CORPSES OF PEOPLE THE MAESTRO DISPOSES OF.

I'LL OPEN IT FOR YOU AND YOU SNEAK IN THAT WAY.

THEN I'LL LEAD YOU TO YOUR BOSS AND WE FREE HIM.

AND THEN WE GO FOR THE MAESTRO.

THAT'S THE PLAN.

I LIKE THAT PART.

later

ARE THEY IN?

THEY ARE.

AND YOU REALLY THINK RUBY AND HER CREW CAN TAKE DOWN THE MAESTRO, LAYLA?

SHHHHH!

WHAT? WHAT IS IT?

DAMMIT, LINQON. KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN! THE MAESTRO HAS EARS EVERYWHERE!

YOU AND DWAYNE HAVEN'T BEEN TALKING TO ANYONE, HAVE YOU?

NO, I SWEAR! DWAYNE--?

NADA.

GET WEAPONED UP. I'M BRINGING THEM IN THROUGH THE SOUTH DOOR.

OOOO, GOOD PLAN.

WITH ANY LUCK, THEY'VE ASSEMBLED A STRIKE TEAM TO GET THE JOB DONE.

AND IF THEY HAVEN'T?

THEN TODAY IS A GOOD DAY TO DIE.

THIS IS A BAD ID--

SHUT UP. WE SCAN WHAT YOU THINK. STOP SAYING IT.

YOU GUYS DOWN THERE? IT'S DARK, I CAN'T SEE.

YEAH, WE'RE HERE.

HERE YOU GO.

I'LL GO FIRST. THE REST OF YOU, STAY TIGHT.

THIS IS A--

SHUT UP!

WHERE'S THE BOSS?

I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE HE GOT HERE, BUT I ASSUME THAT HE'S IN THE DETENTION CELLS IN THE BASEMENT.

HOW'RE WE GONNA GET THERE? THERE'S TOO MANY OF US TO BE QUIET DOWN THE CORRIDOR!

SO THAT'S WHERE WE'RE GOING?

MAKES THE MOST SENSE.

THE CORRIDOR ISN'T GOING TO BE AN ISSUE.

WHOAAAA. THAT'S NICE. HOW'D YOU KNOW IT WAS THERE?

I KNOW STUFF.

COME ON. HURRY UP.

WE'RE HURRYING!

HOW MANY OF YOU ARE THERE? SOLDIERS WHO ARE AGAINST THE MAESTRO?

THERE'S A COUPLE DOZEN WHO TALK A GOOD GAME. BUT LINQON AND DWAYNE ARE THE ONLY ONES I TRUST IMPLICITLY.

HOW MUCH FARTHER?

RIGHT THERE. THEN TO THE LEFT.

THE HEAVY-DUTY CELL IS DOWN AT THE END. IF HE'S ANYWHERE, HE'S THERE.

LEAD THE WAY.

THAT IT?

IT IS.

BEEP

THIS IS IT. GET READY.

WHAT THE--?

HE'S NOT HERE.
I CAN SEE THAT HE'S NOT HERE! WHERE IS HE?
I... I DON'T KNOW.
WHOA! WAIT--!
WHERE IS HE?! WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING AT?!
I KNEW IT WAS A TRICK!
IT'S NOT A TRICK, I SWEAR!
I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE--
HANDS IN THE AIR!
I SAID, HANDS IN THE AIR! *RIGHT NOW!*

I DON'T DO WELL WITH ORDERS!

RRRR

LET'S GET OUTTA HERE! THIS WAY!

NOBODY MOVE!

OR, Y'KNOW, MAYBE ANOTHER WAY.

JAAAAMIE!!!

TAKE THEM DOWN!

STAY STEADY! WHEN SHE STOPS BLASTING, OPEN FIRE!

JAAAAAAAMIEEEEE!!!

WHO THE HELL IS JAMIE?!

WHA--?

KEEP BACK!!!

IS THAT...?

BAAM

JAMIE, YES. RAISED HIM FROM A PUP.

COME HERE, JAMIE!

THAAAT'S MY GOOOOD BOY!

AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO THINKS THIS IS REALLY WEIRD?

YOU GET USED TO IT.

COME ON. LET'S GO.

WHERE, EXACTLY?

YOU WANTED TO TAKE ON THE MAESTRO? THIS IS THE TIME TO DO IT.

WITHOUT THE BOSS?

YOUR BOSS IS OBVIOUSLY DEAD.

YOU WANT VENGEANCE? OR DO YOU WANT TO JUST GET OUT OF HERE?

YOUR CALL.

FOR THE BOSS.

FOR THE BOSS!

OKAY, THEN.

WHOEVER IT IS, THEY'RE THROUGH HERE! TWO-BY-TWO FORMA--

FOLLOW ME! UP THE STAIRS!

STILL DON'T TRUST HER?

I'M GETTING USED TO HER.

WHERE'S THE MAESTRO?!

PROBABLY IN HIS THRONE ROOM! BUT THERE WILL BE A *LOT* OF GUARDS.

LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.

STAND DOWN!!!

I DON'T THINK SO!

RUBY! TAKE THEM DOWN!

FLASH

WELL, WELL...

THADDEUS, IT SEEMS THAT YOUR COMPANIONS WOULD CARE TO JOIN US IN OUR REPAST.

THERE ARE PLENTY OF CHAIRS AROUND. FEEL FREE TO PULL SOME UP.

WE WERE JUST GOING OVER THE DETAILS OF OUR NEW WORKING ARRANGEMENTS, AND BELIEVE IT OR NOT, YOUR NAMES CAME UP QUITE FREQUENTLY.

THE ROAST, BY THE WAY, IS PARTICULARLY DELICIOUS TONIGHT.

AND I SEE THAT YOU HAVE SOME OF MY STAFF ON YOUR SIDE. FORTUNATELY, I AM IN A FORGIVING MOOD.

THIS IS...THIS IS INSANE.

WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM?

WHAT DID YOU DO?!

HE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING, JANIS.

WE'VE BEEN TALKING, THAT'S ALL.

"TALKING"?!

"TALKING"?!?

IT'S WHAT GROWN-UPS DO.

HE'S THE *ENEMY!*

ALL OF YOU, SIT DOWN.

I'M NOT JUST FORGETTING THAT HE--

SIDDOWN, I SAID!

THIS ISN'T GOING THE WAY I THOUGHT IT WOULD.

NO KIDDING.

CAN WE EAT?

NO.

WOULD YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN WHAT THE SHOCK IS GOING ON HERE?

THADDEUS AND I HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING OUR MUTUAL DESIRES.

THE MOST PROMINENT ONE HE HAS IS THAT HE WANTS ME OUT OF DYSTOPIA.

BY STARTLING COINCIDENCE, THAT'S WHAT I WANT AS WELL.

YOU...WANT OUT?

I DO.

AND WHERE EXACTLY DO YOU WANT TO GO?

I WANT TO DEFEAT DOOM AND TAKE HIS PLACE.

DEFEAT DOOM?

BWAHAHAHAA!

DOOM IS GOD!

YOU'VE GOT TO BE JOKING!

DO I LOOK LIKE I'M JOKING?

NO. YOU DON'T.

BUT WE STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS IS ABOUT. YOU CAN'T BEAT DOOM. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.

NO. IT'S NOT.

IT CAN BE DONE WITH THIS.

THE PATH TO IT IS CHALLENGING AND TREACHEROUS. IT IS IN A FAR-OFF LAND, GUARDED BY FEARSOME TROLLS.

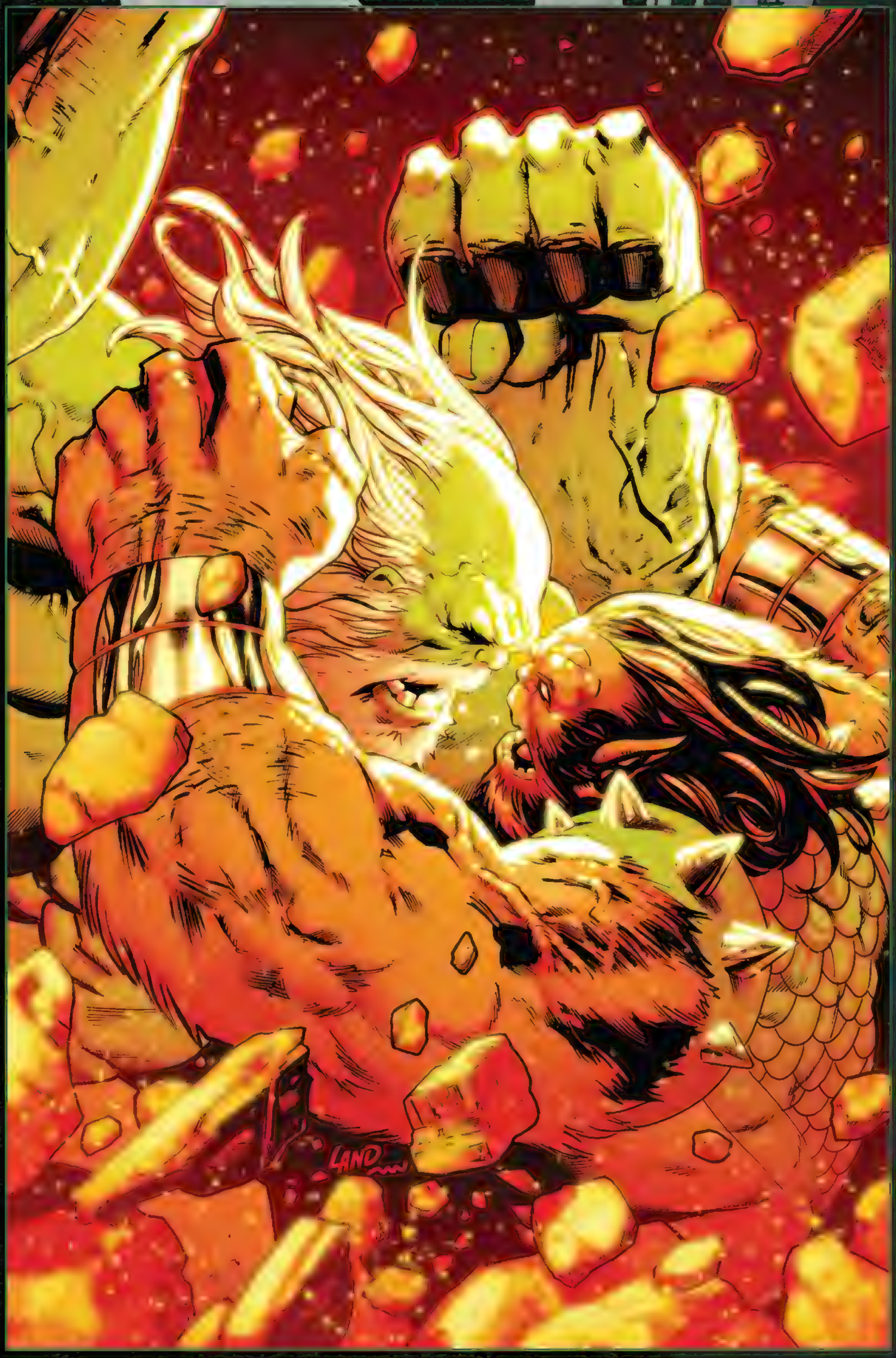
BUT MR. ROSS AND I... AND IDEALLY YOU...CAN OBTAIN IT. ONCE I HAVE IT, I CAN USE IT TO DESTROY DOOM AND TAKE OVER THE WORLD.

AND YOU CAN HAVE DYSTOPIA ALL TO YOURSELVES.

WHAT'S IT CALLED?

"IT IS CALLED... THE *DESTROYER.*"

AND IT WILL BE MINE.



FUTURE IMPERFECT #4

ALL HANDS. WE'RE HERE.

I SEE NO REASON THAT WE HAVE TO BE WEARING THESE DISGUISES.

TO BLEND IN.

THIS IS ANOTHER LAND. YOU REALLY WANNA ALERT DOOM THAT YOU'VE LEFT DYSTOPIA AND ARE WANDERING AROUND IN NORSEHEIM?

HE'LL FIND OUT EVENTUALLY.

YEAH, BUT IF IT'S BEFORE YOU FIND THE DESTROYER...

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT. YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT.

LET'S GO ASHORE.

I MISS JAMIE.

WELL, A BIG DOG WOULDN'T EXACTLY HAVE FIT IN ON THIS GO-AROUND, WOULD HE?

GUESS NOT.

THERE. THAT SEEMS LIKE A GOOD PLACE TO START.

A PUB?

YOU WANT TO FIND SOMEONE, YOU ASK AROUND. PEOPLE WHO ARE DRINKING ARE GENERALLY CHATTIER THAN MOST.

WELCOME. CAN I GET YE ANYTHING?

INFORMATION.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE.

WELL, WHAT'S THE FELLOW'S NAME? TELL ME THAT AND I'LL BE DOING MY BEST TO TELL YE.

HE'S CALLED ULIK.

I TAKE IT YOU'VE HEARD OF HIM.

TINK

GET OUT OF MY PLACE.

NO ONE'S ANSWERED OUR QUESTION.

WE WANT NOTHING TO DO WITH ANYONE SEEKING ULIK.

I SAID GET OUT!

AND I SAID...

ANSWER MY QUESTION.

WHAT... ARE YOU?

AT THE MOMENT? SIMPLY SOMEONE ASKING YOU A QUESTION.

OF COURSE, I COULD BE SOMETHING ELSE.

I COULD BE A *MOVING MAN*, FOR INSTANCE.

THIS TABLE IS SOLID OAK. WEIGHS A FEW HUNDRED POUNDS. BUT I DON'T THINK IT LOOKS GOOD THERE.

HOW ABOUT...

...OUTSIDE?

AL FRESCO DINING.

THAT'S A THOUGHT.

KRADAAA

ULIK RESIDES IN NORNHEIM. THE MAIN ENTRANCE IS ABOUT FIVE MILES WEST OF HERE.

BEAR RIGHT OUT OF THE PUB AND JUST KEEP TO THE PATH. YOU'LL PASS IT, BUT TRUST ME, YOU WON'T MISS IT.

WHO ARE YOU?

HODER?

HODER.

HODER.

AND HOW DOES THE BLIND HODER KNOW THE RESIDENCE OF ULIK THE TROLL?

BECAUSE, ONCE UPON A TIME, I WAS A GOD.

BALDUR WAS MY BROTHER. THOR MY FRIEND. ODIN MY LIEGE.

BUT THAT WAS A LONG, LONG WHILE AGO. BEFORE IT ALL ENDED.

BECAUSE OF ME.

WHEN ULIK KILLS YOU, TELL HIM THAT I SAID HELLO.

THIS IS INSANE.

SKOOTER, ENOUGH.

IT AIN'T ENOUGH! NOT 'TIL YOU LISTEN!

I *HAVE* BEEN LISTENING. DON'T HAVE A CHOICE SINCE YOU KEEP TALKING.

I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE TEAMING UP WITH THE MAESTRO SO HE CAN GET A WEAPON OF SUPREME POWER!

IT'S THE BOSS' CALL.

YEAH, WELL MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T BE LISTENING TO THE BOSS NO MORE.

WHOA! HEY!

SAY ONE MORE THING, SKOOTER.

ANYTHING. AND I'LL BLOW YOUR HEAD OFF.

GO ON. I DARE YOU.

DISSENSION IN THE RANKS?

DISSENSION IS GOOD. IT GETS IDEAS OUT THERE THAT NORMALLY WOULDN'T BE SPOKEN.

YOU KNOW WHAT? WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN FRIENDS A LONG TIME AGO, THADDEUS.

WE'RE NOT FRIENDS *NOW*, BRUCE. WE WILL *NEVER* BE FRIENDS.

I'M JUST TRYING TO GET YOU OUT OF DYSTOPIA, AND IF THIS IS THE WAY TO DO IT, THEN SO BE IT.

AND IF ULIK HAS YOU ON THE BRINK OF DEATH, I'M JUST GONNA STAND THERE AND APPLAUD.

GOOD TO KNOW WHERE I STAND.

I'M A BIG BELIEVER IN HONESTY.

THERE ARE WORSE THINGS TO BELIEVE IN.

SUCH AS THAT YOU'RE THE SUPREME RULER WHOSE WORD IS LAW?

THAT'S NOT A BELIEF. THAT'S THE WAY THINGS ARE.

YEAH, WELL...THINGS CHANGE.

AH. I BELIEVE THAT'S THE ENTRANCE TO NORNHEIM.

VORNHEIM

YOU THINK?

SO THIS ULIK IS SUPPOSED TO BE ABLE TO GUIDE US TO THE DESTROYER?

THAT'S WHAT THE BOOK SAID.

JUST OUT OF CURIOSITY, WHERE DID YOU GET THE BOOK?

STOLE IT.

FROM WHO?

WHO DO YOU THINK?

FROM... DOOM?

I DID.

EVERYONE, HOLD UP.

WHAT? WHY?

WE'RE GOING BACK HOME.

THANK GOD.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM, ROSS?

DO YOU SERIOUSLY THINK YOU WERE ABLE TO STEAL SOMETHING FROM DOOM AND HE WOULDN'T KNOW?

YOU UNDERESTIMATE ME.

AND YOU UNDERESTIMATE DOOM.

WE HAD AN UNDERSTANDING, ROSS.

AND NOW WE HAVE A NEW UNDERSTANDING. MY PEOPLE AND I ARE HEADING BACK TO DYSTOPIA.

I'M AFRAID THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE.

THAT'S VERY TRUE.

NO ONE ENTERS NORNHEIM AND LIVES.

YOU ARE ULIK?

I AM.

WE WANT THE DESTROYER.

AHAHAHA

YOU ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO MAKE DEMANDS, GREEN ONE.

YOU ARE SIMPLY IN A POSITION TO DIE.

HOW ODD.

I WAS JUST ABOUT TO SAY THE SAME THING TO YOU.

KILL THEM!!!

FALL BACK!

FALLEN ONES

WHAT A *MARVELOUS* TRICK!

IT WILL BUY YOU A FEW MORE SECONDS OF LIFE!

YA TALK A GOOD GAME.

BUT WE DIDN'T COME HERE T'TALK.

IF YOU CAME HERE TO DIE, THEN I CAN ACCOMMODATE YOU.

UNFFFF!!!

YOU KEEP TALKING ABOUT KILLING US, BUT I DON'T SEE YOU DOING IT.

TAKE A SWING, THOUGH. LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT.

WHAM

OW.

MY TURN.

ARRRHH!!!

RELEASE ME, FOOL!

NOT UNTIL YOU'VE BROUGHT ME WHERE I NEED TO GO.

OOOOF!!!

THE DESTROYER IS GUARDED BY THE ANCIENT ONE, PLACED THERE BY DOOM HIMSELF.

HE WILL NEVER GRANT YOU ACCESS!

LEAVE THAT TO ME. JUST BRING ME TO HIM.

NEVER!

THEN THIS IS GOING TO GET BLOODY.

KEEP ON THEM! DON'T LET UP!

I KNEW THIS WHOLE THING WAS NOTHING BUT TROUBLE! I KNEW IT!

I KNEW THA--

NO!

KRAAAK

YOU FLARKING CREEP!

BLAAAAM

AW SKOOTER. I'M SORRY.

THIS DOESN'T HAVE TO HAPPEN.

YOU =UNFFFF= THINK TO DEFEAT ULIK?!

I DON'T HAVE TO THINK.

SEE, THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND ME.

I KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.

SOONER OR LATER, YOU'RE GOING TO REALIZE YOU'RE OUTMATCHED.

OUTMATCHED?! I HAVE THE STRENGTH OF A THOR!

REALLY? FUNNY THING.

I'VE HEARD OF THORS. EVERYONE'S HEARD OF THEM.

BUT BEFORE RESEARCHING THE DESTROYER, I NEVER HEARD OF YOU.

AND AFTER WE'RE DONE HERE, I WILL DO MY BEST TO FORGET YOU.

BUT I ASSURE YOU: YOU'LL NEVER FORGET ME.

WAM

WAM

WAM

WAM

WAM

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE, PEOPLE!

RIGHT BEHIND YOU, BOSS!

OOOOF!

I'VE CRACKED FAR HARDER MINERALS THAN YOU IN MY TIME!

STOP. EVERYONE... STOP.

BRING THEM TO THE ANCIENT ONE. LET HIM DEAL WITH THEM.

JUST... DO IT.

THIS IS STILL A BAD IDEA.

I WILL DESTROY DOOM. ISN'T THAT OBVIOUS YET?

NO. DOOM WILL DESTROY YOU.

THEN WHY HAVE YOU ALLIED YOURSELF WITH ME?

BECAUSE I *WANT* DOOM TO DESTROY YOU. ISN'T THAT OBVIOUS?

IT SHOULD BE, I SUPPOSE. BUT YOU STILL DO NOT APPRECIATE THE POSSIBILITIES OF WHAT HAPPENS ONCE I HAVE THE DESTROYER.

DOOM IS NOT A GOD, NO MATTER WHAT YOU MAY THINK. AND ANYTHING NOT A GOD CAN BE DESTROYED.

THROUGH THERE. THE ANCIENT ONE IS THROUGH THERE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

GO TO HEL.

ANCIENT ONE! I AM THE MAESTRO!

I WANT THE DESTROYER!

YEAH?

COOL.

FUTURE IMPERFECT #5

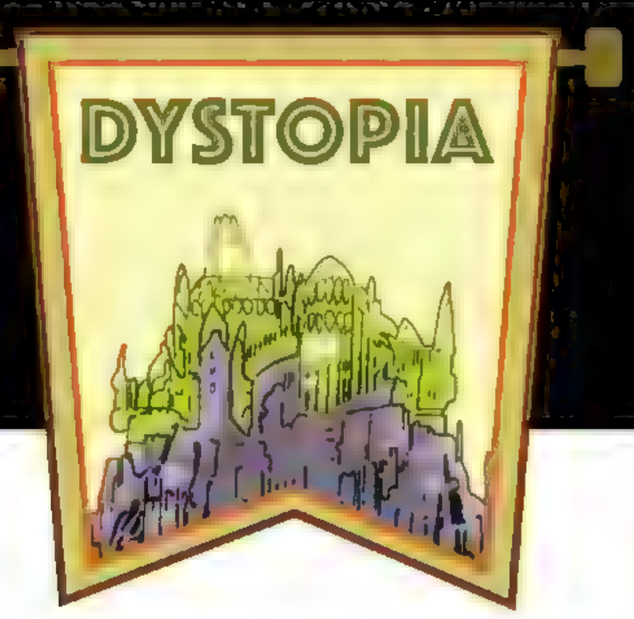
THE MULTIVERSE WAS DESTROYED!

THE HEROES OF EARTH-616 AND EARTH-1610 WERE POWERLESS TO SAVE IT!

NOW, ALL THAT REMAINS...IS **BATTLEWORLD!**

A MASSIVE, PATCHWORK PLANET COMPOSED OF THE FRAGMENTS OF WORLDS THAT NO LONGER EXIST, MAINTAINED BY THE IRON WILL OF ITS GOD AND MASTER, VICTOR VON DOOM!

EACH DOMAIN RULED BY POWERFUL BARONS, BUT NONE MORE TIGHTLY CONDUCTED THAN...



OUR EXALTED BARON, THE MAESTRO, WELCOMES YOU TO HIS TROPHY ROOM OF CONQUERED OPPONENTS.

EXHIBITING THIS SEASON: HALL OF FOOTWEAR

*PLEASE REMAIN QUIET AND RESPECTFUL!

- WAR MACHINE REPULSOR BOOT
- HERCULES SANDAL
- QUICKSILVER CROSS-TRAINERS
- EMMA FROST HIGH HEEL
- BLACK GOLIATH BOOT

GRANDPA?!

Hey, little girl. Been a while.

JONES. *YOU'RE* THE *"ANCIENT ONE"* GUARDING THE DESTROYER?

Got a problem with the name? *"Ancient One"* just seemed kinda better than, y'know, *"Rick."* *"Rick the Guardian."* Doesn't really fly.

SO WHAT WILL IT BE, JONES? DO YOU PLAN TO SPRING SOME TRAP ON ME?

OR PERHAPS YOU WILL ENDEAVOR TO APPEAL TO THE MAN YOU ONCE KNEW THAT YOU STILL BELIEVE DWELLS WITHIN ME.

OR MAYBE YOU'LL--

Jeez, Bruce, you just *never* shut up.

You want the Destroyer? C'mon. I'll show you where it is.

ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO GIVE HIM THE DESTROYER, GRAMPS?

AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE ANYWAY?! I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!

YES?

Janis...

I'm over a hundred years old. I can't hear you when you whisper.

I can barely hear you when you speak normally.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE A SUPER HERO TOO, JONES. THE A-BOMB...

I got over it. Guys like me got no business being super-guys. It messes with your mind.

Trust me on that.

There y'go. All yours.

THAT'S IT?

That's it.

WHAT'S THE TRICK? THE CHALLENGE?

No trick. No challenge. Just take it.

YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS.

Boy, you really can't just handle something when it's handed to you, can you, Bruce?

There's no trick, it's just what I'm telling you. The Destroyer is right there.

All you have to do is touch it and it will obey you.

OR TRY TO DESTROY ME.

Well, it *is* called the Destroyer, so that's an issue, I guess.

NO. IT CAN'T BE THAT SIMPLE. IT CAN'T.

BANNER! LET HIM GO!

NOT UNTIL HE ADMITS THAT IT CANNOT BE THIS SIMPLE!

Simple?

This is anything but simple, Bruce. See... Doom is on his way here. I summoned him.

This is his place of power. It's wish central. All wishing wells, everywhere, are connected to this place.

And he knows you're trespassing. You've got only minutes 'til he gets here.

And then he'll kill you. So... not so much with the simple.

Up to you, man. I really don't give a damn.

IF THIS IS A TRAP, JONES, REST ASSURED, I WILL SURVIVE IT. BUT YOU WON'T.

THAT I PROMISE YOU.

Sorry, what? Wasn't listening.

IDIOT.

ALL RIGHT. NOW WHAT DO I DO?

You? You do nothing. Now it's all the Destroyer.

But here's the question: Are you really sure you want to do this?

Think about it, Bruce, 'cause there's no going back...

STOP CALLING ME "*BRUCE.*" BRUCE BANNER IS LONG GONE.

I'M THE MAESTRO! ***THE MAESTRO!***

EH?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

I'll tell ya what's happening.

It's the beginning of the end. That's what.

IT'S...IT'S *TALKING* TO ME! I CAN HEAR IT!

HOW IS THIS *HAPPENING?*

It's what was meant to happen, buddy.

WHO *DARES?!*

WHO DARES ENTER THE DOMAIN OF THEIR LORD UNINVITED...

...AND SEEK TO STEAL THAT WHICH IS MINE?

YOU ARE FROM DYSTOPIA, YES?

YOU, ORANGE ONE. SPEAK.

YES, GREATNESS.

AND DID YOU LEAD THIS EXPEDITION?

Their leader is out there.

Might wanna get on that.

MAESTRO! I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN!

GET AWAY FROM THAT IMMEDIATELY! YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT--

NO! *YOU* HAVE NO IDEA!

BUT WE'LL FIND OUT TOGETHER!

AND IT WILL BE INCREDIBLE!

Oh...no...

YES!

I WARN YOU, MAESTRO. DO NOT ENDEAVOR TO DO WHAT YOU ARE THINKING OF DOING...

YOU ARE WARNING ME?

YOU DON'T GET TO WARN ANYONE, EVER AGAIN!

I...I THINK WE SHOULD GO. ***NOW.***

YEAH, I'M WITH YOU ON THAT.

I wanted to stay and watch!

YOU CAN SCAN THE ***REPLAY!***

VERY WELL, MAESTRO. IF THIS IS WHAT YOU INSIST ON DOING...

SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES!

IS THAT IT?

IS THAT TRULY ALL THE POWER THAT THE GREAT DOOM HAS TO MUSTER?

HOW IN THE WORLD HAVE YOU POSITIONED YOURSELF AS OUR LEADER IF THAT IS THE SUM OF YOUR OFFENSIVE CAPABILITIES?

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW LONG I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS, DOOM!

FOR AGES I'VE BOWED TO YOU! I'VE SERVED YOUR WHIMS AND DONE WHATEVER YOU'VE INSTRUCTED ME TO DO!

AND FOR ALL THAT TIME, I'VE DREAMT OF THIS MOMENT!

THE MOMENT WHEN THE GREAT DOOM FALLS, AND THE MAESTRO RISES TO TAKE OVER THE ENTIRETY OF THE WORLD!

AND IT WAS TRULY WORTH WAITING FOR!

UNHAND ME! AT ONCE!

AT ONCE, I SAID!

YOU SEEM TO BE UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT YOU STILL GET TO DELIVER ORDERS!

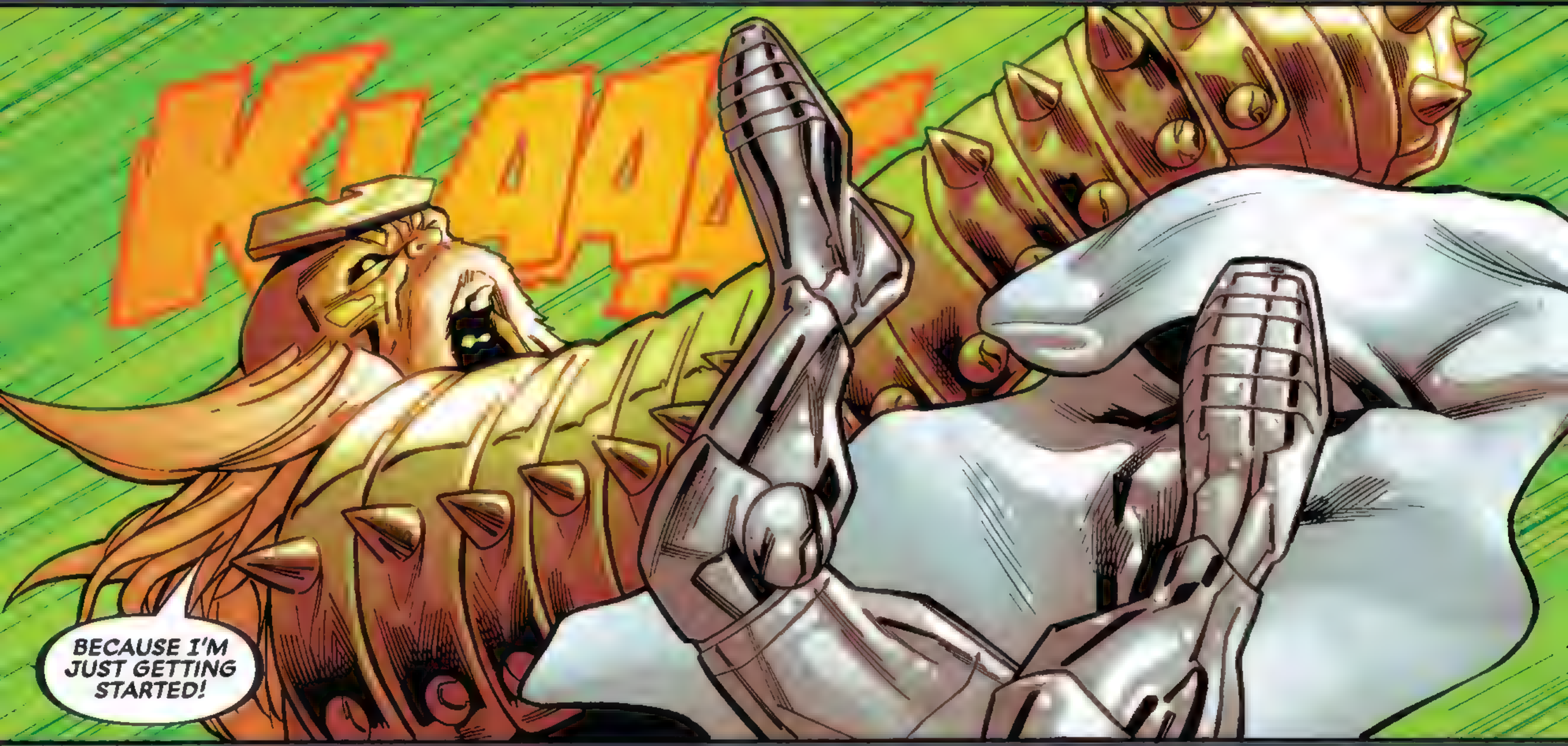
GO ON! HIT ME!

SHOW ME YOUR POWER!

IS THAT THE BEST YOU HAVE?

I'M SERIOUS. YOU'RE LETTING ME DOWN HERE.

DONE YET?


BECAUSE I'M JUST GETTING STARTED!

I'M NOT EVEN SURE I NEEDED THE POWER OF THE DESTROYER.
IT'S A FUN ADVANTAGE TO HAVE, GRANTED. BUT YOU'VE HIT ME WITH NOTHING I COULDN'T HAVE HANDLED BY MYSELF.

REALLY.
LET US SEE HOW YOU HANDLE A *DISINTEGRATION BLAST!*

UNHHH...

NO... NO...

A LITTLE HIGHER. JUST UNDER THE SHOULDER BLADE.

THAAAAAT'S IT.

THIS ISN'T *POSSIBLE!* HOW ARE YOU *DOING* THIS?!

I'LL SAY THIS, THOUGH...THAT'S A RATHER POWERFUL DISINTEGRATION BEAM YOU HAVE.

THE THING IS...

I HAVE ONE AS WELL.

LET'S SEE HOW WELL *YOU* HOLD UP!

THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING! YOU...YOU CAN'T--

I THINK YOU'LL FIND I CAN.

MAESTRO... *LISTEN* TO ME...

I SEE NOW THE *STRENGTH* THAT YOU POSSESS. YOUR CLEVERNESS, YOUR *RESOURCEFULNESS*...

IF WE JOIN OUR POWERS... NOTHING CAN POSSIBLY...

SERIOUSLY? YOU THINK NOW, AT THE MOMENT OF YOUR DEFEAT...

YOU CAN STRIKE A BARGAIN WITH ME?

VERY WELL. I OFFER YOU A COUNTER:

YOU DIE. AND I RULE.

HOW IS THAT FOR A DEAL?!

EE-EE-YARRRHRHHHHH!!

I DID IT.

I DID IT!

I AM THE NEW RULER OF THE WORLD.

I AM THE NEW GOD!

EVERYONE...

BOW DOWN TO ME!

UH... GRAMPS...
WHAT THE HELL IS HAPPENING?
He won.
EXCUSE ME?
YES! BOW DOWN TO ME! THAT IS AS IT SHOULD BE!
He wished to defeat Doom.
It gave him that wish.
DO NOT WORRY. I SHALL BE A JUST GOD. A BENEFICENT GOD.
AND ALL WHO OBEY ME WILL LIVE.
AND...HOW LONG WILL HE STAY HERE?
I told him going in, this is a wishing well.
It grants wishes.
Until he dies.

Go home now.

AND YOU'RE COMING WITH US, GRAMPS...?

Nope. This is where Doom assigned me. This is where I have to stay.

Me and him. Until the end of time.

THAT SUCKS.

Eh. There's worse ways to live.

I AM THE MAESTRO! KING OF KINGS!

LOOK ON MY WORKS, YE MIGHTY...

...AND DESPAIR!

end.

SECRET WARS: BATTLEWORLD #4

the domain of dystopia.
baron maestro's castle.

MAESTRO!
MAESTRO!

MAESTRO, PLEASE...

...I NEED YOUR--

I NEED YOU TO GO AWAY.

CAN'T YOU SEE I'M BUSY?

BUT THIS IS A MATTER OF SOME URGENCY! WE--

WE HAVE AN INTRUDER!

I'M FEELING BENEVOLENT THIS EVENING. INVITE THE INTRUDER IN HERE.

LET HIM PICK OUT A FEMALE AND ENTERTAIN HIMSELF RATHER THAN SKULK AROUND.

HE'S NOT SKULKING, SIRE! HE'S WALKING RATHER DECISIVELY.

WHERE?

THE TROPHY ROOM, SIRE.

THE TROPHY ROOM? HE CAN'T ACCESS THAT.

THE DOOR SEALING IT IS FAR TOO THICK.

HE SEEMS ABLE TO JUST... CUT IT OPEN!

WITH BEAMS THAT EMERGE FROM HIS FINGERTIPS!

ASSEMBLE A SQUAD! FOLLOW ME.

ANYONE WHO THINKS TO STEAL FROM ME...

...IS GOING TO BE *SADLY* MISTAKEN.

EEK!

CRUNCH

HE'S JUST AHEAD, SIRE.

I KNOW WHERE THE TROPHY ROOM IS, YOU IDIOT. NOW STEP ASIDE AND...

SO. IT'S YOU.

YOU HAVE CHANGED MUCH FROM THE DAYS THAT WE FOUGHT SIDE BY SIDE AS THE DEFENDERS.

AND THAT CHANGE HAS NOT BEEN FOR THE BETTER, I DARESAY.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, SURFER?

RETRIEVING SOMETHING THAT IS MINE. OR DID YOU THINK YOU COULD KEEP IT FOREVER?

HOW DID YOU ACQUIRE IT, ANYWAY?

A GIFT FROM DOOM.

IT WAS NOT HIS TO GIVE.

NOR YOURS TO KEEP.

NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, HULK...

WHAAAAAM!

I DON'T THINK I WILL!

AND THE NAME *ISN'T* HULK!

IT'S MAESTRO!

WHUMP

OOF!

WELL, *THIS* IS A WASTE OF TIME.

BOOM

SMASH!

HOLY CRAP!

NOW WHAT?!

IT MAY HAVE *BEEN* YOUR BOARD, SURFER. BUT IT'S MINE NOW. AND NO ONE CAN--

OH, *DO* SHUT UP.

FWAZAAAK

WUUMPFF

TO ME, MY BOARD!

SHOULD WE GO DOWN THERE AND HELP HIM?

YOU WANNA FIGHT THE SURFER? 'CAUSE I SURE AS HELL--

WHOA!

HOLY--!

AH, MY POOR BOARD. LOOK AT YOU. FEAR NOT--

I WILL HEAL YOU.

HEAL THIS!

THOOM!

ARRHHH!

UNHHH!!

ARE YOU FINISHED?

HOW IN THE--?

I HAVE SURFED THROUGH THE HEART OF THE SUN JUST TO HAVE A GOOD VIEW.

DID YOU TRULY THINK YOUR HAND SLAP WAS GOING TO DISCOMMODE ME IN SOME MANNER?

I HAVE TARRIED HERE TOO LONG ALREADY.

I HAVE ANOTHER TEAM-- AND ANOTHER HULK, FOR THAT MATTER-- TO WHOM I HAVE PLEDGED MY ALLEGIANCE.

DALLYING HERE WILL NOT SERVE THEM.

FAREWELL, HULK.

SOMEBODY CLEAN THIS MESS UP.

I PRAY WE DO NOT MEET AGAIN. FOR YOUR SAKE.

MAESTRO #1

An explosion of experimental gamma energy turned scientist Bruce Banner into the super hero known as the Hulk, one of the strongest beings in the universe.

The Hulk once traveled to the future and met his older self, a despotic ruler who goes by the name the Maestro.

We know what turned Bruce Banner into the Hulk. But what turned the Hulk into the

MAESTRO?

LIFE IS GOOD.

IT JUST COULD NOT POSSIBLY GET ANY BETTER.

BETTY AND MY SONS AND I ARE HAPPY. EVERY SO OFTEN I GET TO GET OUT AND STRETCH MY LEGS.

HARD TO BELIEVE.

SO HARD TO BELIEVE.

SYMPHONY IN A GAMMA KEY

PART ONE: OVERTURE

IF I DIDN'T SEE IT, I WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT. YOU'RE A ONE-MAN TEAM, DOCTOR BANNER.

WELL, IT HELPS KNOWING I HAVE THE BEST BACKUP IN THE WORLD IF SOMETHING EVER GOES WRONG, CAP.

WHAT COULD *POSSIBLY* GO WRONG?

WHAT... *COULD* GO WRONG?

NOTHING. THAT'S WHAT.

NOTHING COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG.

SHE'S RIGHT. SHE'S ABSOLUTELY RIGHT.

IT'S FUNNY: WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, I WAS SO TERRIFIED I WOULD BECOME MY FATHER THAT I ACTUALLY DEVELOPED A ***DISSOCIATIVE DISORDER*** AS A MEANS OF COPING. MY PERSONALITY SPLINTERED AND CREATED THE HULK...AND MULTIPLE VARIATIONS.

BUT THOSE DAYS ARE LONG BEHIND ME. I'M MERGED. I'M ***BETTER.***

THADDEUS!

RICK!

STOP YOUR RUNNING AND SIT DOWN! DINNER'S GETTING COLD!

WE DON'T HAVE TO DO WHAT YOU SAY.

OH? WHY NOT?

BECAUSE YOU'RE DEAD.

WHAT?

WHAT?

COME ON, BOYS. THE MEAT LOAF IS VERY GOOD.

BETTY, WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT?

AND WE HAVE MASHED POTATOES.

SHE'S DEAD. RICK'S DEAD. THADDEUS ROSS IS DEAD.

DEAD DEAD DEADY DEAD DEAD...

SPRANG

HULK

BETTY! I SAID, WHAT THE HELL IS HE TALKING ABOUT?

BETTY, SAY SOMETHING! SAY--!

HTTP 404.

BAD COMMAND OR FILE NAME. BAD COMMAND OR FILE NAME.

BETTY! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?!

AN ERROR HAS BEEN ENCOUNTERED AND THE PROGRAM NEEDS TO CLOSE. SORRY FOR THE INCONVENIENCE.

BETTY!

WHAT IN GOD'S NAME IS HAPPENING?

IT'S A TRICK, BRUCE. JUST HOLD ON.

A... TRICK?

MYSTERIO. HE'S GETTING INTO YOUR MIND.

WH-WHEN DID MYSTERIO EVER FIGHT THE AVENGERS? THIS...THIS DOESN'T TRACK.

HANG ON.

THERE WE GO.

THAT WAS EXCITING.

LET'S DO IT AGAIN!

WE OKAY, BRUCE?

I...I GUESS S--

NO! WE'RE NOT OKAY! HOW DID MYSTERIO DO THAT? WHY? FOR WHAT POSSIBLE REASON?

WE DON'T KNOW. WE'RE GOING TO INVESTIGATE...

NONE OF THIS MAKES ANY SENSE!

BRUCE, SIT DOWN. THE FOOD'S GETTING COLD.

YOU SAID THAT ALREADY.

WE HAVE MEAT LOAF. AND MASHED POTA--

SHUT UP! *JUST SHUT UP!*

I NEED TO GET OUT. GET SOME AIR.

JUST STAY HERE, BRUCE. WE NEED TO TALK.

I'VE JUST GOT TO CLEAR MY HEAD IS ALL.

BRUCE, NO! STAY PUT!

WE HAVE MEAT LOAF.

I'LL BE BACK LATE--

THE HELL--?!

IF THIS IS MYSTERIO, HE'S MANAGED TO RAISE HIMSELF UP TO *DOC STRANGE* LEVELS OF ILLUSIONS.

JUST CALM DOWN, BRUCE. DON'T GET ANGRY.

THE SUN'S GETTING REEEAL LOW...

WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT, WIDOW?

JUST SETTLE DOWN, BRUCE. I KNOW IT'S CONFUSING.

HOW DID YOU GET OUT THERE? YOU WERE STANDING BEHIND ME.

NO, I WASN'T.

YES, YOU W--

SCREW IT. I'M OUT OF HERE.

WAIT. DO NOT LEAVE.

I'LL LEAVE IF I WANT TO.

AND I AM SAYING THAT YOU WILL REMAIN.

LET GO OF MY WRIST, THOR. NOW.

JUST TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO--

WHAT PART OF "*NOW*" WAS CONFUSING?

LET ME MAKE IT CLEAR: DO NOT MOVE.

AH. OKAY. THANKS FOR MAKING IT *CLEAR.*

THERE'S NO SOUND.

THAT'S ODD.

NORMALLY I'D HEAR SOMETHING. A THUD OR KRUNCH OR SOME OTHER ONOMATOPOEIA.

BUT THERE'S NOTHING. JUST SILENCE. LIKE...

LIKE I'M IN A DREAM.

OOOOOFF!

GET HIM.

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS.

THOOOOM

THAT'S BETTER.

THE *VISION*. THAT FIGURES.

VIBRATIONS DON'T SLOW SOMEONE WHO CAN GO *IMMATERIAL*.

I APOLOGIZE FOR THIS, DOCTOR BANNER. IT IS THE ONLY WAY.

NO!

THIS IS GOING TO HURT, I'M AFRAID.

SON OF A--

GET OUT OF MY HEAD, YOU BASTARD!

S-STOP IT--

GET OUT...

...OF MY...

...HEAD!

WHAT THE HELL?

BREEET!

BREEET!

I SET OFF SOME KIND OF ALARM. THAT'S NOT GOOD.

WHAT...IS THIS PLACE?

I HAVE A ***BEARD***. HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN HERE, WHEREVER HERE IS?

OKAY, DOCTOR BANNER, JUST...JUST STAY CALM.

I KNOW YOU MUST HAVE A LOT OF QUESTIONS. SO WE JUST NEED TO--

RICK?

THAT'S...

THAT'S ***MY SON***...

HOW...?

GET OUT OF THE WAY.

DOCTOR BANNER, WE NEED TO--

MOVE!

OOOOF!

WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE.

LET ME GO!

RICK, CALM DOWN...

YOU HURT MY MOMMY!

LEMME GO LEMME GO LEMME GO!

YOUR...

YOUR *MOMMY?*

ARE YOU OKAY, MOMMY?

I'M...I'M FINE, TERRY...IT'S JUST A MISUNDERSTANDING.

I DON'T GET ANY OF THIS.

HOW--?

FREEZE, DOCTOR BANNER!

WE WON'T WARN YOU AGAIN!

A.I.M. SOLDIERS. I'VE BEEN CAPTURED BY A.I.M.

NOW THIS...

...I UNDERSTAND.

YOU KNOW WHAT? I THINK YOU'RE WRONG.

I THINK YOU *WILL* WARN ME AGAIN.

OUR WEAPONS CAN HURT YOU, DOCTOR BANNER. WE *WILL* OPEN FIRE.

COME ON. LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT.

DON'T KEEP ME WAITING.

I'M WARNING YOU--!

THERE IT IS.

YES, SO YOU KEEP SAYING, AND YET I'M NOT HEARING ANYTHING EXCEPT BOASTING.

FIRE!

BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA

CRAP.

THOSE THINGS PACK SOME KIND OF *PUNCH.*

MORE SOPHISTICATED THAN WHAT I'M USED TO...MORE POWERFUL...

STARTING TO... BLACK OUT...

NO.

HELL NO.

I AM NOT GOING TO LET THEM PUMMEL ME INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS AND HOOK ME BACK UP TO THAT...THAT *THING*...

THOOM

NO! TAKE HIM DOWN!

HURRY! CLOSE IN!

DAMMIT!

ALERT THE BASE!

INCREDIBLE. THERE'S MORE PEOPLE DOWN HERE, ALL IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION LIKE I MUST HAVE BEEN.

THAT'S *VAPOR.* I WONDER IF ANY OF THE OTHER *U-FOES* ARE HERE.

AND THE *ABOMINATION.* WHY DOES A.I.M. HAVE THEM WIRED UP?

NO FARTHER, DOCTOR BANNER. I'M WARN--

TO HELL WITH YOUR WARNINGS!

WAAAM

UNFFF!

A *FORCE-FIELD?* WHERE DID THAT COME FR--

FWAZAAAAAM

RIGHT. THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT.

I ASSUME YOU REMEMBER ME, DOCTOR.

M.O.D.O.K.--MENTAL ORGANISM DESIGNED ONLY FOR KILLING.

HULK--HAS UNUSUALLY LARGE KIDNEYS.

KIDNEYS?

WELL, THAT'S OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD. PLUS, Y'KNOW, THEY ARE.

VERY LIKELY.

"KNUCKLES" WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN BETTER.

I DARESAY.

MY GOD, HE LOOKS GHASTLY. LIKE HE'S AGED A HUNDRED YEARS.

WHAT'S GOING ON, M.O.D.O.K.? WHERE'S BETTY? WHERE'S RICK JONES?

THEY'RE *DEAD*, DOCTOR. LONG DEAD.

WHAT DID YOU DO?

NOTHING.

WHAT DID YOU DO?!

NOTHING!

WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO DO, DOCTOR? KILL ME? *GO AHEAD!*

I COULD'VE KEPT YOU BACK WITH A FORCE-FIELD! I LET YOU GRAB ME!

END MY LIFE! IF YOU CALL THIS A LIFE!

YOU'D BE DOING ME A FAVOR! COME ON!

COME ON!

RRRRR--!

TO BE HONEST, I HAD *FORGOTTEN* YOU WERE DOWN HERE.

MY CIRCUITRY IS FAILING, I FEAR. CREDIT IT TO AGE, PLUS THE FACT THAT ANYONE WHO WOULD HAVE BEEN SMART ENOUGH TO FIX ME IS LONG DEAD.

EVERYTHING BREAKS DOWN... INCLUDING THE PROGRAM THAT KEPT YOU ENGAGED, APPARENTLY.

YOU SAID THEY'RE DEAD. HOW DID THEY DIE? WHO WAS IT?

THE LEADER? DOCTOR DOOM? YOU?

THEY DID.

"THEY" WHO? HYDRA?

NO, YOU IDIOT! THE GREAT "THEY"!

WHENEVER YOU COMPLAIN ABOUT THE AWFUL THINGS "THEY" ARE DOING TO THE WORLD BECAUSE OF "THEIR" STUPID DECISIONS!

YOUR LEADERS! YOUR GOVERNMENTS! THE GREAT UNWASHED!

THEY!

WORLD WAR III.

"SOME TERRORIST GROUP SET OFF ***NUCLEAR WEAPONS*** IN BOTH THE UNITED STATES AND MOSCOW AND CONVINCED BOTH NATIONS--THROUGH THEIR ***COMPUTERS***-- THAT THE OTHER WAS RESPONSIBLE.

"FROM THERE IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME.

"BY THE TIME IT WAS SORTED OUT, SIXTY PERCENT OF HUMANITY WAS GONE.

"AND THEN, SOME YEARS LATER CAME THE NEXT, SMALLER OFFENSIVE. THEY CALLED THEMSELVES...

"...THE ***BLACK SCYTHE.*** EVOCATIVE OF THE WEAPON WIELDED BY THE CLASSIC GRIM REAPER IMAGERY.

"THEY HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT HUMANKIND'S TIME ON THIS WORLD WAS OVER. THAT IT WOULD BE BEST FOR US TO SIMPLY GO THE WAY OF THE DINOSAURS.

"MILLIONS WERE STILL DYING OF RADIATION POISONING, BUT THAT WASN'T SUFFICIENT FOR THEM.

"SO THEY UNLEASHED A SPECIALLY PREPARED GAS IN PHILADELPHIA, CHICAGO, LONDON... HUNDREDS OF CITIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

"IT WAS...***MOST*** EFFICIENT."

WHY DON'T I REMEMBER ANY OF THIS?

BECAUSE WHEN THE FIRST MISSILES FELL, WE TOOK YOU. YOU AND OTHERS.

TOOK US? WHY?

WE SEIZED INDIVIDUALS WHOSE BODIES SEEMINGLY MADE THEM ***BENEFIT*** FROM RADIATION. GAMMA RADIATION, COSMIC RAYS AND THE LIKE.

NO CLASSIC "HEROES." WE DOUBTED THEY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN ALIGNING WITH OUR DESIRES.

YOUR "DESIRES" BEING...

SURVIVAL, DOCTOR BANNER. NOTHING MORE.

THESE SOLDIERS...THEY HAVE FAMILY. FRIENDS. THEY WANT TO LIVE, SAME AS EVERYONE ELSE.

A.I.M. HAS THIS FACILITY BELOW THE STREETS OF LOS ANGELES. WE BROUGHT THEM HERE. WE BROUGHT ***YOU*** HERE.

YOU SHOULD BE ***THANKING*** US.

WAAAM

THANKS.

NO ONE IS STOPPING ME, OR EVEN *TRYING* TO STOP ME.

ARE THEY REALLY GOING TO LET ME WALK OUT OF HERE, JUST LIKE THAT?

MAYBE IT'S ALL A LIE. I MEAN, WOULDN'T THE HEROES HAVE STOPPED IT SOMEHOW?

RIGHT, RIGHT. LIKE THEY STOPPED CHERNOBYL.

AND THE FALL OF THE TWIN TOWERS.

AND THE THOUSANDS WHO DIED IN MASS SHOOTINGS.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT GUN CONTROL. SEE WHAT THE RED SKULL IS UP TO.

THE FACT IS, YOU CAN'T SAVE A WORLD THAT'S DETERMINED TO DESTROY ITSELF.

THAT'S JUST A SIMPLE FACT.

MY GOD.

HE WASN'T LYING. THEY REALLY DID IT. THEY BLEW THEMSELVES TO HELL.

ALL THE ADVENTURES WE HEROES HAD...EVERYTHING WE DID TO PROTECT THEM FROM THE BAD GUYS...

BUT WE COULDN'T PROTECT THEM FROM THEMSELVES.

AND THE REALLY CRUSHING THING IS... EVEN IF A TERRORIST GROUP HADN'T STARTED IT...

...SOONER OR LATER, THE GOVERNMENTS WOULD HAVE DONE IT THEMSELVES.

BECAUSE HUMANKIND IS SO DAMNED SELF-DESTRUCTIVE THAT ALL WE COULD DO WAS STEM THE TIDE. BUT YOU CAN'T STOP THE TIDE ENTIRELY--OR REVERSE IT. EVENTUALLY...

...YOU GET SWEPT AWAY BY IT.

WHY DID YOU COME HERE?

THIS WAS THE ONLY THING LEFT.

WHAT ELSE IS OUT THERE?

HOLLYWOOD

MORE OF THE SAME.

COME BACK WITH ME, DOCTOR BANNER.

I CALCULATE THAT WITHIN 27 YEARS, RADIATION WILL DECREASE SUFFICIENTLY AND WE WILL BE ABLE TO LEAVE OUR SHELTERS.

WHY? TO REBUILD?

WELL, YES. OBVIOUSLY.

SO THAT HUMANITY CAN REGENERATE? THRIVE? AND BLOW ITSELF UP AGAIN?

ONE WOULD HOPE THE SAME END WOULDN'T RESULT...

...WHAT ARE YOU...

KREE-UNH

NO THANKS.

COME WITH ME, DOCTOR BANNER. YOU CAN HAVE FRIENDS--

I DON'T NEED THEM. FRIENDS DIE. AND STOP CALLING ME DOCTOR BANNER.

THAT'S NOT ME ANYMORE.

SO YOU'RE THE HULK FULL-TIME NOW, ARE YOU?

FOR NOW.

"WE'LL SEE WHAT THE FUTURE BRINGS."

HULK

MAESTRO #2

I PRAYED HE WAS EXAGGERATING.

I MEAN, ***M.O.D.O.K.*** IS A ***BAD GUY.*** BAD GUYS LIE. KIND OF WHAT THEY DO.

I'VE KNOWN SO MANY BAD GUYS. AND SO MANY GOOD GUYS.

AND THEY ALL KNEW ME.

OR AT LEAST THEY THOUGHT THEY DID.

HELL, WE ALL THINK WE KNOW EACH OTHER.

WE EVEN THINK WE KNOW OURSELVES.

BUT THE TRUTH IS, WE KNOW ***NOTHING.***

KNEW NOTHING.

I SHOULD REALLY GET USED TO REFERRING TO HUMANITY IN THE PAST TENSE.

BECAUSE I HAVE TO SAY, WHEN IT CAME TO THE SUBJECT OF ***OBLITERATING ITSELF...***

...HUMANITY WAS REMARKABLY THOROUGH.

SYMPHONY IN A GAMMA KEY

PART TWO: SONATA

HOOVER DAM GOT ANNIHILATED. CONSEQUENTLY TOWNS A FEW DOZEN MILES AWAY WERE FLOODED.

LAS VEGAS, MY FORMER HOME BACK WHEN I WAS MISTER FIXIT. NOT MUCH EVEN MISTER F. COULD HAVE DONE ABOUT THIS.

PARKS ARE ALSO UNINHABITABLE.

POOR DUMB ANIMALS.

I MEAN, HUMANS DID THIS TO THEMSELVES, BUT WHAT DID THE ANIMALS DO TO DESERVE THIS?

NOTHING.

THEY DIDN'T EVEN UNDERSTAND WHY THE THINGS THEY WERE EATING WERE POISONED.

I'M REMINDED OF ALL THE HUMANS WHO BELIEVED IN GOD. WHO THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING TO WALK INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IF THEY JUST OBEYED HIS WORD.

PEOPLE WHO BELIEVED THAT GOD HAD A PLAN.

SCREW YOU, GOD. YOU AND YOUR PLAN.

DON'T LIKE MY ATTITUDE?

COME AND GET ME.

NO MATTER WHERE I GO, FROM COAST TO COAST ALL I SEE IS EVIDENCE OF HUMANS' STUPIDITY.

AND THERE WAS NO GREATER SOURCE OF THAT STUPIDITY THAN HERE, IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL.

YOU GOT OFF LUCKY, ABE. THEY SHOT YOU.

"HOW WAS THE PLAY?" "WELL, IT SUCKED, BUT THEN THEY SHOT THE PRESIDENT, SO THAT LIVENED UP THE SECOND ACT PRETTY--"

THE HELL?

MY GOD.

WHO IN THE HELL IS THAT?

HE SEEMS OKAY. CERTAINLY ISN'T DYING, SO THAT'S A PLUS.

I'M NOT SURE IF HE'S RUNNING AWAY FROM ME OR TOWARD SOMETHING ELSE. OR MAYBE BOTH.

I COULD JUST STOP HIM, OF COURSE, BUT LET'S SEE IF HE BRINGS ME SOMEWHERE USEF--

AH.

CALL ME CRAZY, BUT I THINK I'VE HIT *PAY DIRT.*

NOW I JUST GOT TO FOLLOW HIM DOWN.

TRAPDOOR'S TIGHT, BUT I CAN MAKE IT.

OF COURSE, I'VE NO IDEA WHERE I AM, BUT THAT'S HARDLY A--

HALT!

OH, PERFECT.

OKAY, WAIT. HOLD ON.

I HAVE AN *ITCH* RIGHT THERE THAT'S DRIVING ME NUTS.

FOCUS YOUR FIRE THERE. THAT'D BE GREAT, THANKS.

VERY AMUSING, DOCTOR BANNER.

WE FOUGHT MANY YEARS AGO, BUT I LOOKED QUITE DIFFERENT THEN.

MACHINE MAN.

BUT YOU CAN CALL ME *AARON.*

WELCOME TO THE *BUNKER.*

I'D INVITE YOU TO STAY, BUT OUR RESOURCES ARE LIMITED AND WOULD PRECLUDE YOUR NEEDS, I'D THINK.

YOU'RE LOOKING GOOD.

YES, WELL, BEING *IMMORTAL* WILL DO THAT TO YOU.

OH, I DUNNO. I'M IMMORTAL AND I LOOK LIKE CRAP.

I SUPPOSE. I PREFER "IMMORTAL" TO "ARTIFICIAL," BUT THE LATTER IS REALLY MORE ACCURATE FOR ME.

STOP

POTUS-LEVEL CLEARANCE REQUIRED FOR ADMITTANCE BEYOND THIS POINT

SO WHERE AM I, ANYWAY?

APPROACHING THE WHITE HOUSE. WELL...

"...WHAT *REMAINS* OF THE WHITE HOUSE."

"SO THE PRESIDENT, THE VICE PRESIDENT--?"

"DEAD. ALONG WITH THE CABINET, CONGRESS...

"HONESTLY, THE ENTIRE CONCEPT OF *GOVERNMENT* IS DECEASED. THERE'S JUST *SURVIVORS* NOW."

BASICALLY, THESE QUARTERS ARE POPULATED BY DESCENDANTS OF WHITE HOUSE EMPLOYEES WHO ESCAPED DOWN HERE WHEN THE BOMBS STARTED FLYING.

WE HAVE ENOUGH SUPPLIES TO LAST ANOTHER SEVENTEEN YEARS, ALTHOUGH I CALCULATE THAT WITH YOUR LIKELY CALORIC INTAKE IT WOULD DROP TO 3.9...

YES, I GET IT...

WAIT. WHAT'S THAT? THAT'S A *CITY!*

FORMERLY NEW YORK. IT'S NOW CALLED *DYSTOPIA* BY ITS RESIDENTS.

IT WAS CONSTRUCTED BY ITS OVERSEER. HE GOES BY THE NAME *"MAESTRO."*

IT'S ITALIAN FOR MASTER.

I KNOW WHAT IT MEANS.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ME EATING YOUR RATIONS.

I HAVE *GOT* TO MEET THIS GUY.

DYSTOPIA

FUNNY. "MAESTRO" WAS THE NICKNAME I PICKED UP BACK IN COLLEGE, BECAUSE I WAS SO FAR AHEAD OF EVERYBODY.

THEN AGAIN, I'VE HAD SO MANY NAMES...BANNER, HULK, MISTER FIXIT, THE DEVIL...

I PRETTY MUCH ANSWER TO ANYTHING.

UNHH...

WHAT'S... WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME...?

FEELING DIZZY...

HAVING TROUBLE...

FOCUSING ON...

KRUNCH

SO IT SEEMS EVEN I HAVE MY LIMITS. I...THOUGHT I COULD JUST ABSORB THE AMBIENT RADIATION...

BUT EVEN MY BODY NEEDS TIME TO *HEAL*, I GUESS.

MAYBE IF I...JUST ...JUST REST FOR--

WAIT... WHAT'S...WHAT'S THAT NOISE...?

OH MY GOD.

IT WAS ALWAYS PREDICTED THAT WHEN HUMANITY WENT EXTINCT, ONLY *COCKROACHES* WOULD SURVIVE.

VZZZT

IT SEEMS THE RADIATION ONLY SPED THAT ALONG.

ARGGGHHH!

GET...THE HELL...OFF ME!

SONS OF--!

NOW WHAT?!

SHREEEEEEEEEEL

SOME SORT OF... *SONIC WAVES...*

AND THEY DEFINITELY DON'T LIKE IT.

WHOA. SCAN IT. HE'S STILL *ALIVE.*

YOU OKAY, BIG GUY?

I've...had worse...

Just need...a moment to...

WUUM

THIS GUY MUST WEIGH HALF A TON, BOZ!

WELL, WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM.

NOT SCANNING WHY NOT.

HOW 'BOUT 'CAUSE I'M THE BOSS AND I SAY SO.

FIIIINE.

HE'S AWAKE.

GREETINGS. I AM **BOZ.** WHO MIGHT YOU BE?

I'M... **BRUCE.**

NOT EXACTLY A FITTING NAME, BUT ALL RIGHT.

YOUR WOUNDS HAVE COMPLETELY HEALED.

YEAH, MY BODY'S LIKE THAT. UH...WHERE AM I, EXACTLY?

THIS IS OUR SETTLEMENT. WE HAVEN'T GIVEN IT A NAME.

THERE IS NO RADIATION HERE, MAKING IT SOMETHING OF A RARITY.

IN THAT REGARD, WE ARE MOST FORTUNATE.

WHO PRECISELY IS "WE"?

WE CALL OURSELVES THE ***WASTELAND SURVIVALISTS.***

WE ARE ENDEAVORING TO RESTORE NUTRIENTS TO THE GROUND IN ORDER TO GROW CROPS.

WE HAVE HAD SUFFICIENT SUCCESS SO FAR. WE DREAM OF GREATER.

AND THAT'S DYSTOPIA, YES?

IT IS INDEED.

TELL ME ABOUT THE MAESTRO.

THEY SAY HE IS GOD.

WELL, NOW I'VE ***REALLY*** GOT TO MEET HIM.

GRAMPS!

GRAMPS!

DAMMIT, JANIS! I ALMOST HAD IT!

YOU NEED TO KNOW--

I ALREADY KNOW EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW. FRANKLY, THERE'S PLENTY I'D LIKE TO FORG--

HE'S BACK.

WHO'S BACK?

THAT GREEN GUY YOU USED TO LOVE.

OSCAR THE GROUCH?

NO, NO... THAT BIG, HULKING GUY... WHAT WAS HIS NAME...?

THE HULK?

THAT'S IT. DAKORD SAID HE WALKED RIGHT INTO TOWN'S SQUARE, BIG AS LIFE.

INCREDIBLE. I'M NOT SURE, BUT I THINK THIS MIGHT HAVE BEEN TIMES SQUARE ONCE UPON A TIME.

IT'S AMAZING HOW FAR DOWN THE SCALE HUMAN EVOLUTION HAS GONE IN JUST A FEW DECADES.

WHAT...ARE YOU?

I'M NEW IN TOWN. I WANT TO MEET THE MAESTRO.

NOBODY JUST "MEETS" THE MAESTRO. HE--

I'M SORRY...

DO I LOOK LIKE NOBODY TO YOU?

N-NO SIR.

ARE YOU THE HULK?

WHO WANTS TO KNOW?

I AM THE *MINISTER.*

THE *MAESTRO* DISPATCHED ME TO BRING YOU TO HIM.

SO THIS "MAESTRO"...WHO IS HE?

HE IS OUR GOD.

YES, I'VE HEARD THAT. WHERE DID HE COME FROM?

WHEREVER GODS COME FROM.

YOU'RE BEING LESS HELPFUL THAN I WOULD HAVE HOPED.

THIS CITY WAS DESCENDING INTO *CHAOS*. THE MAESTRO APPEARED AND BROUGHT EVERYTHING INTO *ORDER*.

WHEN HE DECLARED HIMSELF OUR RULER, NONE DARED DISPUTE HIM.

SO HE TOOK POWER.

SOME OBJECTED. THEY DIDN'T LAST.

HE RULES US WELL. IF THERE ARE ANY DISPUTES, THEY ARE BROUGHT BEFORE THE MAESTRO AND HE MAKES JUDGMENTS.

SO HE'S JUDGE, JURY AND EXECUTIONER.

WHEN IT'S ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY, YES.

MAESTRO! YOUR VISITOR IS HERE!

IS IT HIM?

I BELIEVE IT IS.

BANNER!

IT'S BEEN AN AGE.

RELICS

Part One of Three

THEY SAY THERE WAS A FIGHT HERE. A REALLY BIG FIGHT.

BEEN HERE A DOZEN TIMES AND ALWAYS SCAN SOMETHING NEW.

'COURSE, THESE GOGGLES GRAMPS GAVE ME HELP.

SAID THEY WERE MADE BY SOME GUY NAMED FORGE.

ATTUNED FOR SUPER STUFF LIKE A BAT--

HOLD ON. GOT SOMETHING.

WHAT DO YOU SCAN, JANIS?

SOMETHING. NOT SURE.

THERE. IT'S RIGHT THERE.

YOU SURE? THERE WAS NOTHING THERE A WEEK AGO.

MAYBE IT'S TRYING TO DIG ITS WAY OUT.

OOOOKAY.

I THINK YOU WERE RIGHT.

WHAT IS IT?

CAN'T KEN IT.

SCRAAPE

LOOKS LIKE... A HANDLE OR SOMETHING.

A HANDLE TO WHAT, DAKORD?

TO WHATEVER IT'S ATTACHED TO, OBVIOUSLY.

HERE, I'LL PULL IT OUT.

CAREFUL. DON'T BREAK IT.

I'M NOT GONNA...

UMMFF... THING'S WEDGED IN THE GROUND.

GIMME A MOMENT TO...

C'MONNNNN!

YEAH, OKAY. THAT THING'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

TOO HEAVY TO LIFT.

DOESN'T SEEM THAT BIG.

YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME, JANIS. IT'S NOT BUDG--

--ING.

WHOA. OKAY. VERY IMPRESSIVE.

I WONDER IF IT HAS ANY POWER.

WZ AAAA AAA

WEIRD THING. I THOUGHT GRAMPS WOULD BE THRILLED TO SEE THIS. INSTEAD HE TOLD ME TO PUT IT DOWN AND NEVER TOUCH IT AGAIN.

THEN HE ROLLED AWAY MUTTERING, "*SHE'S* WORTHY? GEEZ!" NEVER DID KEN WHAT HE MEANT BY THAT.

MAESTRO #3

HERCULES?

YOU'RE THE MAESTRO?

I AM INDEED, BANNER!

BY ZEUS, IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU!

I THOUGHT YOU DEAD! WHERE HAVE YOU *BEEN?*

M.O.D.O.K. HAD ME ON ICE.

M.O.D.O.K.-- THE GIANT FLOATING HEAD, YES?

PRETTY MUCH.

IT'S MARVELOUS THAT YOU HAVE SHOWN UP.

THE TRUTH IS...YOU WERE ALWAYS MY FAVORITE.

YOUR, UH... YOUR FAVORITE WHAT?

SPARRING PARTNER.

SYMPHONY IN A GAMMA KEY

PART THREE: ADAGIO

YOU'VE GOTTEN RUSTY, BANNER! I THOUGHT YOU COULD TAKE A PUNCH!

BLOODYELL!

YEWSTOOPID--

ARGGHH!

THAT *HURT*, YOU OLYMPIAN OAF!

WHAM

THE BLACK CIRCUS

HERCULES DIES

FRAK

A HIT! A *PALPABLE* HIT!

HOW I'VE WAXED NOSTALGIC FOR THESE DAYS!

WITH NONE TO OPPOSE ME, I FEARED I HAD LOST MY EDGE!

MY DEEPEST THANKS FOR HELPING ME SHED THOSE CONCERNS!

KRUNCH

OOOOFF!

OH, I'M GOING TO KILL HIM. HE IS GOING DOWN SO--

DOCTOR BANNER?

NOT NOW.

YES, NOW.

I'M DAKORD. THIS IS PIZFIZ.

I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE PUNCH AND JUDY. I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF A--

RICK JONES WANTS TO SEE YOU.

WHAT... DID YOU SAY?

BY GOD...WHICH IS TO SAY, BY *ME*...

THAT WAS GLORIOUS!

I HOPE YOU DID NOT MISUNDERSTAND, BANNER. THAT WAS SIMPLY MY WAY OF DOING YOU HONOR!

WHAT BETTER WAY TO GREET AN OLD SPARRING PARTNER THAN BY HAVING A SET-TO, EH?

BUT NOW I CRAVE *OTHER* ENTERTAINMENT!

COME! I HAVE A NUMBER OF ROBUST WOMEN WHO WOULD LIKE TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE!

AND THE BEST FOOD IN THE REGION!

I CAN SATE BOTH YOUR APPETITES AT ONCE!

WHAT SAY YOU--

HULK?

HMM.

WELL, *THIS* IS MOST IRRITATING.

HEY, BRUCE. YOU'LL PARDON ME IF I DON'T GET UP.

HENH. YOU'RE LOSING YOUR HAIR.

JOIN THE CLUB.

X-MEN

RICK... MY GOD... HOW...

HOW *OLD* ARE YOU?

THIRTY-NINE. LOOKING PRETTY GOOD, HUH?

YOU LOOK GREAT.

THIS IS MY GRANDDAUGHTER, JANIS.

NAMED AFTER JOPLIN.

HE'S CLEAN, GRANDFATHER.

UH, THANKS?

SO I HEAR YOU RAN INTO HERC. OR THE "MAESTRO," AS HE'S CALLED NOW.

WE SURE IT'S REALLY HIM? NOT A SKRULL IMPOSTER OR SOMETHING?

OHHH YEAH. IT'S HIM. BUT HE'S... CHANGED.

HE CARES ABOUT SEX. ABOUT PARTYING. ABOUT LIVING LIKE THERE'S NO TOMORROW.

BUT THE CITY'S FILLED WITH ORDINARY PEOPLE JUST TRYING TO SURVIVE. AND HE DOESN'T GIVE A CRAP ABOUT THEM AT ALL.

ORDINARY PEOPLE?

HE DOESN'T CARE ABOUT THEM?

THAT'S RIGHT.

WHY SHOULD HE?

WHAT?

THIS ROOM FULL OF TROPHIES YOU'VE BEEN MAINTAINING...

ALL THESE HEROES FOUGHT ON BEHALF OF ORDINARY PEOPLE, YES?

FOUGHT AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF VILLAINS TO RULE THEM.

YEAH.

ORDINARY PEOPLE.

ORDINARY PEOPLE DESTROYED THE WORLD, RICK!

NOT THE LEADER! NOT THE RED SKULL! *NONE* OF THE DESPOTS WE FOUGHT AND DIED AGAINST!

ORDINARY DAMNED PEOPLE BROUGHT IT DOWN AROUND THEIR BLOODY EARS!

AND I'M SUPPOSED TO CARE IF HERCULES IS GIVING THEM SHORT SHRIFT?!

IF HERCULES HAD ANY BRAINS, HE WOULD *LAY WASTE* TO ALL THE ORDINARY PEOPLE. JUST...JUST MOW THEM DOWN EN MASSE.

GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON WHY ANYONE SHOULD CARE ABOUT *ORDINARY PEOPLE?*

BECAUSE *BETTY* WAS ONE. AND SO WAS MARLO. AND ME.

AND ONCE UPON A TIME, SO WERE *YOU.*

THEY'RE SHEEP, RICK. THAT'S ALL THEY ARE, ALL THEY'RE GOOD FOR.

THEY SHOULD BE RULED WITH AN IRON HAND.

USED TO FORM AN ARMY THAT CAN BRING *UNITY* TO THE WORLD.

UNDER WHOSE RULE? YOURS?

WE COULD DO WORSE.

YOU SOUND LIKE *DOCTOR DOOM.*

MAYBE DOOM WAS ONTO SOMETHING.

I NEED A LAB.

DAKORD... TAKE HIM TO *ALCHEMAX...*

OR AT LEAST WHAT'S LEFT OF IT.

"WELL... THERE IT IS."

"ALCHEMAX," HUH? LIKE THE NAME.

IT WAS SCIENCE CENTRAL BEFORE SCIENCE STOPPED MATTERING.

WHAT DO YOU NEED IT FOR?

I'M PLANNING TO BUILD SOMETHING.

CARE TO JOIN ME?

HUNH.

OKAY, GUESS NOT.

FINE. NOT LIKE I NEEDED HER.

THE HULK DOESN'T NEED *ANYBODY.*

BLAST AND DAMN. FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN SEARCHING THROUGH THIS PLACE FOR DAYS.

EMPTY OFFICES. EMPTY LABS.

AT LEAST THE EMERGENCY LIGHTS ARE STILL ON. MUST HAVE AN INDEPENDENT POWER SOURCE.

THE SIGN OUTSIDE SAID THIS WAS *CYBERNETICS.* THAT COULD DEFINITELY BE USEFUL.

BUT IT WON'T SERVE ON ITS OWN. I NEED...

HMM.

"LAB RATS." NOW *THAT* SOUNDS PROMISING.

LAB RATS

GENETICS

I MEAN, EVEN IF IT'S LITERAL, THAT COULD BE PROMISING.

CYBER-RATS. THOSE COULD BE USEFUL WEAPONS.

HOLY COW.

I'VE STRUCK THE MOTHER LODE.

WELL, I KNOW WHAT *I'M* GONNA BE DOING FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

KRAAK

MAESTRO!

MAESTRO, A MOMENT OF YOUR TIME...

IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, I'M BUSY, MINISTER.

GIGGLE

BUT SOMETHING HAS COME UP OF A MOST IMPORTANT--

DO I LOOK LIKE I CARE?!

VERY WELL.

FRANKLY, I DOUBT THE HULK WANTED TO SEE YOU ANYWAY.

THE HULK?

YES, MAESTRO.

SHOW ME.

YES, MAESTRO.

I AM TOLD THAT YOU ARE ALL *ORDINARY PEOPLE!*

WELL, I DON'T BELIEVE THAT!

"ORDINARY" IS THE TERM ASSIGNED YOU BY THOSE WHO BELIEVE THEY ARE YOUR BETTERS!

"ORDINARY" IS SO THEY CAN BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE NOT A THREAT!

BUT I HAVE SEEN WHAT ORDINARY PEOPLE CAN DO!

ORDINARY PEOPLE CREATED VACCINES THAT SAVED THE LIVES OF MILLIONS.

ORDINARY PEOPLE TOOK US TO THE MOON.

ORDINARY PEOPLE SAW NOT WHAT WAS, BUT WHAT COULD BE.

ORDINARY PEOPLE MADE THEMSELVES EXTRA-ORDINARY BECAUSE LEADERS TOLD THEM WHERE TO GO AND WHAT TO DO!

AND I AM PREPARED TO DO THAT.

THERE IS A WORLD BEYOND DYSTOPIA. I HAVE SEEN IT, STRODE ACROSS IT.

AND NOW...

I AM READY TO RULE IT.

WITH YOUR HELP, WE CAN BUILD THIS COUNTRY UP AND MAKE IT GREATER THAN IT WAS.

LET ME GIVE YOU A GLIMPSE OF WHAT I CAN PROVIDE...

RAWRRRR

HOLY--!

WHAT IN THE WORLD...?

RRR

I CALL THEM THE *DOGS OF WAR.*

IMAGINE AN ARMY OF THEM, MY FRIENDS. AN ENTIRE *ARMY.*

RRRRRR

THEY WILL DO THE FIGHTING. ALL YOU WILL NEED TO DO IS CLEAN UP BEHIND THEM.

WHO OF YOU WILL JOIN ME?

WHO WILL LEAVE THIS ONE CITY BEHIND AND DREAM OF TAKING ON THE ENTIRETY OF THE COUNTRY? OF MAKING IT *GREATER* THAN THEY EVER DREAMED?

WHO'S WITH ME?!

RRRP

FLARK THAT.
NO WAY.
BIG GREEN'S NUTS.
THE HELL WITH THAT.
FINE. HAVE IT YOUR WAY.
SIC 'EM.
RAWRRRRR
NOW WE HAVE A BALL GAME.

YEEEEEAAA

LET'S HURRY, BEFORE IT...

WELL, WELL.

I THINK WE'VE FOUND OUR SCAVENGER RIVAL.

BACK OFF IF YOU WANNA LIVE...

OHHH CRAP.

TOMMY, I KNOW HIM. THAT'S RICK JONES.

WHO?

RICK FREAKIN' JONES. CAPTAIN AMERICA'S SIDEKICK. AND THE HULK'S.

YEAH, WELL CAP AND THE HULK AIN'T HERE.

SO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE BEFORE--

BLAAAH

IDIOT.

WELL? HURRY UP, RICK. I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO DO THIS BY MYSEL--

DR

MARLO!

BLAM

Heh...

THUUD

Marlo...

MAESTRO #4

I WARNED YOU! I GAVE YOU ALL A CHANCE!

BUT YOU DECIDED TO IGNORE ME! SNUB ME! WALK AWAY FROM ME!

FINE!

NOW YOU GET TO *RUN IN FEAR!*

NOOOO!

I CONCUR.

NO.

SYMPHONY IN A GAMMA KEY

PART FOUR: MINUET

HEY! LEGGO, YA FREAK!

YOU DARE SPEAK SO TO THE SON OF ZEUS?

THAT WAS AN ERROR, MY FRIEND.

LET ME SHOW YOU THE MAGNITUDE OF IT!

TELL ME, BANNER...

IS THIS TRULY THE BEST YOU CAN DO?

I HAD THOUGHT BETTER OF YOU.

IT IS TRAGIC TO DISCOVER THAT I OVERESTIMATED YOU.

COME, BANNER!

IMPRESS ME! GIVE ME YOUR BEST SHOT!

YOU WANT IT?

YOU GOT IT!

THOR

HUH?

WAS THAT SUPPOSED TO IMPRESS ME?

THIS IS A DISAPPOINT-MENT.

BUT IT APPEARS I MUST EXPRESS IT--

--IN A MORE DEMONSTRATIVE MANNER.

GYROS

WAAAM

GYROS

WAAAM

GYROS

GYROS

HAAA

GY

WAAAM

PUNY BANNER.

OOOOOFF!

THOOOOM

I'LL KILL YOU!

I'LL FREAKING KILL YOU!

HAVE YOU ANY CLUE HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE MADE THAT THREAT? HOW MANY TITANS? MONSTERS? DEMONS?

OVER HOW MANY THOUSANDS OF YEARS?

AND GUESS WHAT, BANNER.

I'M STILL HERE.

RRRGHH--

THEIR THREATS NOTHING BUT BARELY REMEMBERED ECHOES IN MY EARS.

AND I'M STILL HERE.

?!

THEIR BODIES LONG AGO REDUCED TO FORGOTTEN DUST.

AND I'M STILL HERE.

AND IN FIVE HUNDRED YEARS, WHEN YOUR BODY IS DEPARTED AND YOUR MEMORY FORGOTTEN...

I...

...WILL STILL...

...BE HERE!

BACK WHEN YOU WERE MINDLESS, THIS WOULD NOT HAVE STOPPED YOU, YOU KNOW.

IT WOULD SIMPLY HAVE ENRAGED YOU. MADE YOU STRONGER.

BECAUSE THE MADDER YOU GOT, THE MORE POWERFUL YOU BECAME.

BUT THAT ISN'T YOU ANYMORE, IS IT?

BANNER'S BRAIN IS IN CONTROL.

BANNER UNDERSTANDS HOW OVERPOWERED HE IS.

BANNER KNOWS WHEN HE IS OUTMATCHED.

OFF!

BANNER KNOWS HE CANNOT FIGHT BACK!

NOT AGAINST THE MIGHT OF THE *MAESTRO!*

KRADAM

I AM NOT ENJOYING THIS, BANNER. IT HAS CEASED BEING FUN FOR ME.

SURRENDER.

SURRENDER... BEFORE I KILL YOU.

WAM WAM WAM WAM WAM WAM WAM WAM WAM WAM WAM

I...

I GIVE UP.

HAPPY?

MORE RELIEVED, ACTUALLY.

I TRULY DID NOT WISH TO KILL YOU.

STAND, BANNER.

STAND AND EMBRACE ME.

YEAH, OKAY, THIS IS GETTING WEIRD NOW.

COME. ENTER MY PALACE AND DROWN YOURSELF IN GOOD FOOD AND FEMALE COMPANIONSHIP.

I DON'T THINK SO.

HOW NOW? YOU WOULD PASS ON MY HOSPITALITY?

I HAVEN'T EARNED IT.

I INSULTED AND ATTACKED YOUR SUBJECTS. I DEFIED YOU.

I MUST MAKE... AMENDS.

I WILL RETURN AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE...

...WHEN I CAN DO SO SUFFICIENTLY.

THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR.

THIS IS NOT...

...GOING TO END WELL.

YOU'RE RIGHT, DAKORD. IT'S *NOT* GOING TO END WELL.

HOW DO YOU KNOW, GRAMPS?

DID I EVER TELL YOU ABOUT BRUCE'S DAD?

A LITTLE. HE ABUSED HIM AS A KID.

YEAH. AND HE SHAPED BRUCE INTO WHAT HE IS.

BRUCE BANNER... THE GUY I MET...THE ONE WHO SAVED MY LIFE...

...HE WAS JUST ONE *SPLINTERED PERSONALITY.*

THE GUY WHO WAS HERE EARLIER? THAT'S THE *REAL* BRUCE.

AND...?

THEY SAY THE SON INEVITABLY BECOMES THE FATHER.

THAT'S WHO WAS IN HERE EARLIER.

NOT THE ORIGINAL BRUCE, THE SELFLESS GUY WHO NEARLY KILLED HIMSELF TO RESCUE A STRANGER.

THIS BRUCE... HE WOULDN'T GIVE UP. HE'D SCHEME, HE'D PLOT, AND EVENTUALLY...

...HE'D WIN.

"IT MIGHT TAKE SOME TIME, BUT SOONER OR LATER, HE'LL COME BACK, AND TRUST ME...

"...HERC'S GONNA DIE."

KNOCK KNOCK

SO. YOU'VE RETURNED.

I HAVE INDEED. AND AS YOU CAN SEE...

I'VE BROUGHT COMPANY.

IS THE MAESTRO AVAILABLE?

INDEED, HE IS.

ENTER...

FREELY AND OF MY OWN WILL?

PARDON?

NOTHING. OLD REFERENCE.

OH.

SLAM

MAESTRO! DOCTOR BANNER TO SEE YOU!

BANNER! IT HAS BEEN QUITE SOME TIME.

WELL, I HAD SOME ADVENTURES. GOT MY NECK BROKEN AT ONE POINT, SO THAT LAID ME OUT FOR A WHILE.

YES, I'M SURE. AND WHO IS YOUR ASSOCIATE?

THIS IS ANN. *ANN DARNELL.*

AND BRUCE HAS TOLD ME ALL ABOUT YOU.

I'M VERY ANXIOUS TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, MAESTRO.

WELL, WELL. UNARMED, I SEE.

GOOD CHOICE OF WARDROBE.

COME, MY DEAR. LET ME SHOW YOU AROUND THE PALACE.

BANNER! FEEL FREE TO ENTERTAIN YOURSELF.

MUCH OBLIGED.

SO BANNER, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE FIRST?

THE DINING HALL? PERHAPS THE SAUNA...

THE THRONE ROOM.

WHATEVER ROOM HE RULES FROM.

RIGHT THIS WAY.

ACTUALLY, BEFORE WE GO, I JUST HAVE TO RETRIEVE SOMETHING I LEFT OUTSIDE.

SOMETHING YOU LEFT...?

OUTSIDE, YES. WON'T TAKE BUT A MOMENT.

THERE WE ARE. PRIVACY.

SO. ANN.

LET US GET...

...BETTER ACQUAINTED.

I WAS THINKING EXACTLY THE SAME THING.

YOU ARE MOST APPEALING.

LET US SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO.

BY ALL MEANS, LET ME SHOW YOU.

BY THE WAY, "ANN" ISN'T THE ONLY NAME I GO BY.

OH, AND WHAT OTHER MONIKERS DO YOU SPORT?

MISTRESS OF PAIN? MADAME MERCILESS?

ACTUALLY...

IT'S *VAPOR.*

WHAT--?

DON'T YOU REMEMBER THE *U-FOES?* A.I.M. KEPT ME OUT OF THE GAME FOR A WHILE, BUT NOW I'M *BACK.*

AND THIS *GAS...?*

IT'S ARSINE. MAIN INGREDIENT OF ARSENIC.

CRRRRR!

KRRRRRRRRRK

KRRRRRRRRRK

KRAK

PERFECT. THAT WAS EASIER THAN I COULD HAVE--

THUD

CRACK

EH?

ARRRRRRRRRH!!

IT'S AMAZING WHAT YOU COULD FIND LYING AROUND AT ALCHEMAX.

BOOM

THERE WE GO. THAT'S BETTER.

A VAST IMPROVEMENT. BUT IT STILL NEEDS SOMETHING.

AH. I KNOW.

KRAK BLAKK

WHAT'S HAPPENED H--?

OH MY GOD.

TAKE ALL THESE PIECES AND BURY THEM INDIVIDUALLY.

ALL OVER THE KINGDOM. OUT IN THE PLAINS.

MAKE SURE THAT THEY CAN NEVER RE-INTEGRATE.

SORRY, HERC. DIDN'T REALLY HAVE A CHOICE.

NOBODY BEATS THE HULK.

NOBODY.

GET HIM OUT OF HERE.

MAESTRO #5

SYMPHONY IN A GAMMA KEY

PART FIVE: RONDO

WELL, THAT WAS EASY.

VAPOR WAS NEVER ONE FOR MURDER, BUT FORTUNATELY I WAS ABLE TO APPEAL TO HER...*LESSER* NATURE.

NOW SHE'S IN SHATTERED PIECES THROUGHOUT DYSTOPIA, HERCULES IS DEAD, PEOPLE ARE IN MOURNING...

...AND ALL I HAVE TO DO IS KICK BACK AND LET MATTERS TAKE THEIR *LOGICAL COURSE.*

PEOPLE OF DYSTOPIA!

THE MAESTRO WILL LIVE ON IN ALL OF OUR MEMORIES, THAT MUCH IS CERTAIN.

HE DEVELOPED DYSTOPIA. GAVE YOU ALL SOMEWHERE TO LIVE AND A WAY IN WHICH TO SURVIVE.

IN THIS DAY AND AGE, THAT CONTRIBUTION CANNOT BE UNDER-ESTIMATED.

BUT NOW... NOW IT IS TIME TO MOVE ON.

AND *I* SHALL LEAD YOU ON THAT PATH.

I SHALL HELP YOU MARCH FORWARD IN A NEW--

WHY *YOU*?

EXCUSE ME?

WHY YOU? WHO PUT YOU IN CHARGE?

WHY WOULD THE MAESTRO WANT YOU TO RUN THINGS?

MAYBE WE SHOULD HAVE...I DUNNO... AN *ELECTION* OR SOMETHING.

YEAH. *THIS* IS GONNA END WELL.

PIZFIZ AND DAKORD ARE UP THERE.

GET 'EM OUT, JANIS.

HE'S RIGHT!

WE SHOULD HAVE AN ELECTION!

ONE PERSON, ONE VOTE!

AN ELECTION. LIKE THE MAESTRO WAS ELECTED?

IT WAS A DIFFERENT TIME!

SO IS THIS.

BUT IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME...

...PERHAPS YOU'D LIKE TO TAKE IT UP WITH MY *DOGS OF WAR.*

HERE'S SOME OF THEM NOW.

I'M SURE THEY'LL BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS IT.

GENTLEMEN...

ATTACK.

EE YARRRRRHHHHH!

WHAT THE HELL?!

RUN! EVERYBODY RUN!

CRAP! THAT GUN'S SUPPOSED TO BE DOWN *HERE!*

ISN'T THAT--?

FORGE BUILT IT, YEAH. TO *KILL THE HULK!*

WELL, LET'S HOPE IT *WORKS...*

CRAFF

KABOOM

ARGGGGGHH!

I KNOW YOU. YOU'RE ONE OF *JONES'* PEOPLE.

HE SEND YOU AFTER ME?

HE'S GOING TO REGRET THAT BEFORE--

BANNER!

YOU DID THIS!

YOU DID THIS TO ME!

THAT'S... THAT'S IMPOS--

YOU CAN'T BE ALIVE!

BECAUSE THAT WOMAN YOU BROUGHT ME MURDERED ME?

AYE, SHE DID. HADES IS DOING ME A FAVOR...

ALLOWING ME TO WREAK VENGEANCE...

...ON YOU!

OOOOFF!

NOW YOU WILL PAY FOR--

EH?

SENDING MINIONS TO DO YOUR DIRTY WORK, BANNER?

I USED TO THINK BETTER OF YOU!

NOW I KNOW YOU FOR THE COWARD THAT YOU ARE!

DOES THIS SEEM COWARDLY TO YOU?!

OR THIS?

NO. JUST STUPID.

YOU ALWAYS WERE EASY TO MANIPULATE, HULK.

NOW DIE BEFORE THE PRINCE OF POWER!

HUH?

I NEVER LIKED HIM ANYWAY.

HERE YOU ARE, SIR.

...MUCH OBLIGED, MINISTER.

ANYBODY *ELSE* HAVE ANYTHING THEY WANT TO ADD?

YEAH. DIDN'T THINK SO.

JONES! YOU'RE NEXT!

JONES! WE'RE HAVING IT OUT, YOU AND--

WHAAM

--ME?

HEY, BRUCE. HOW'S IT HANGING?

GOT FORGE'S GUN, HUH?

AFRAID TO FACE ME, JONES?

WELL, DUH.

YOU'VE GOT HEAVY ARMAMENT, AND YOU'RE NUTS. ANY SANE PERSON WOULD BE AFRAID TO FACE YOU.

YOU THINK I'M CRAZY?

I KNOW YOU ARE.

I'M THE ONLY ONE IN DYSTOPIA WHO'S SANE, JONES. I SEE THE WORLD FOR WHAT IT IS: A TOXIC WASTELAND, MADE THAT WAY BY YOU HUMANS.

YOU USED TO BE ONE OF THOSE HUMANS, BRUCE.

USED TO BE. I'VE BECOME SO MUCH MORE.

YOU COULD HAVE DONE SO TOO.

ME?

YOU WALKED WITH GODS, RICK. HELL, FOR A TIME, YOU ***WERE*** ONE.

YOU WERE A HULK. YOU WERE ***A-BOMB***. YOU HAD THE POWER AT YOUR FINGERTIPS.

YOU COULD HAVE LIFTED YOURSELF ABOVE HUMANITY'S PETTY CONCERNS.

YOU COULD HAVE BEEN ME.

THE SON BECOMES THE FATHER--YOU EVER HEAR THAT SAYING?

NO MATTER WHO YOU START OUT AS, YOU EVENTUALLY TURN INTO YOUR DAD.

YOU'RE NOT BRUCE BANNER ANYMORE. YOU'RE *BRIAN* BANNER...

THE ABUSIVE S.O.B. WHO DESTROYED HIS SON AND TURNED HIM INTO THE SHELL OF A MAN HE BECAME.

SHUT UP.

GOODBYE, BRUCE.

BLACKOUT
GOOD LORD!
WHAT WAS THAT?!

OW.

WH-WHAT HAPPENED, SIR?

HAD A CONVERSATION WITH AN OLD FRIEND.

AND HE TRIED TO DESTROY YOU?

YOU'D BE AMAZED HOW OFTEN THAT OCCURS.

EVERYONE UP HERE OKAY?

SHAKEN UP BUT OTHERWISE INTACT.

SHALL WE GO TO YOUR CASTLE... BANNER? OR DO YOU PREFER HULK?

ACTUALLY, I THINK I'VE OUTGROWN BOTH NAMES.

CALL ME...

MAESTRO

THE BEGINNING

RELICS

Part Three of Three

I LOVED IT WHEN YOU CALLED ME SON. IT MADE ME THINK I HAD A FATHER.

YOU DID YOUR BEST, SON.

DON'T REMEMBER MY FATHER.

THERE WAS A CRAZY LADY--JACKIE SOMETHING--CLAIMED SHE WAS MY MOTHER. WOUND UP KILLING MARLO. THAT WAS A WHOLE THING.

SOMETIMES I WONDER WHAT MY LIFE WOULD'VE BEEN LIKE IF I HADN'T LOST 'EM SO YOUNG.

IF I'D HAVE BEEN A MUSICIAN. OR A LAWYER. OR MAYBE... I DUNNO...

AN INSURANCE SALESMAN.

YOU EVER WONDER WHAT ELSE YOU COULD'VE BEEN?

NOPE. ALWAYS BEEN HAPPY BEING THE ONE AND ONLY CAPTAIN MARVEL.

ONE AND ONLY. DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH.

ME...ALL I HAVE IS STUFF TO WONDER ABOUT.

ALL I HAVE ARE MEMORIES.

GRAMPS?

HE'LL BE HERE SOON, WE NEED TO PACK THIS STUFF UP AND GO.

HEY, WHO WERE YOU JUST TALKING TO?

NO ONE.

NOT FOR A LONG TIME.

END

MAESTRO: WAR & PAX #1

WELCOME TO HARTFORD

WHATTAYA GOT?

CHECK-POINT ALPHA, AGAIN, WHATTAYA GOT?

WHY AREN'T THEY ANSWERING?

HOW THE HELL DO I KNOW? MAYBE THE EQUIPMENT'S ON THE FRITZ.

IT WAS WORKING FINE TEN MINUTES AGO. MEBBE THEY'RE GONE. MEBBE THEY'RE--

WHINE ONCE MORE, TANGRETTI. I DARE YA.

YEAH, THERE'S A THREAT. END ME.

YOU'D BE DOING ME A FAVOR.

I SWEAR TO GOD, ONE MORE WORD--

HOLD ON. I GOT SOMETHING...

OH FLARK.

WHAT IS IT?

OH FREAKING FLARK.

WE ARE SO SCREWED.

HE'S COMING.

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

HE'S FLARKING COMING.

FOR GOD'S SAKE, TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE!

THEY'RE CHURNING UP DIRT FROM THE SIDE OF THE ROAD. HARD TO MAKE OUT DETAILS.

IS HE WITH THEM?

CAN'T SEE FOR SURE.

YUP. IT'S AN ARMY OF HIS ROBO DOG SOLDIERS. HIS ***DOGS OF WAR.***

IS. HE. ***WITH.*** THEM?

I CAN'T MAKE HIM--

THOOOOOM

HI THERE.

THEY CALL THEMSELVES THE ***STALKERS.*** THEY CLAIM THEY GOVERN CONNECTICUT. OR MORE ACCURATELY, WHAT'S ***LEFT*** OF CONNECTICUT.

I SENT AN EMISSARY TO INFORM THEM THAT I WAS NOW IN CHARGE. THAT THEY WERE TO SUBMIT TO MY RULE.

THEY SENT MY EMISSARY'S HEAD BACK ON A STICK.

I DID NOT TAKE WELL TO SUCH A DISPLAY OF DISRESPECT.

SO I AM MAKING MY DISPLEASURE KNOWN.

War & Pax

PART ONE:

VENI

KILL HIM!

KILL HIM!!!

NO, NO, NO. WHEN YOU SCREAM LIKE THAT, YOU SOUND HYSTERICAL. LIKE YOU'RE SCARED.

NO ONE TAKES THAT SERIOUSLY. IT DOESN'T SOUND THREATENING ENOUGH.

YOU HAVE TO GIVE THE ORDER, SIMPLY, QUIETLY...

...TO UNDERSCORE THAT YOUR ENEMIES' LIVES DON'T MATTER.

LIKE THIS:

KILL THEM.

RAARRRRR!

RAARR!

RAARR!

THE STALKERS GIVE A GOOD FIGHT. GOT TO ADMIT THAT MUCH.

NOT THAT IT MAKES ANY DIFFERENCE.

ALL THE ADULTS ARE DEAD, SIR.

AND THE CHILDREN?

SOME DIED WITH THEIR PARENTS. SOME FLED BEFORE THEY COULD BE CAPTURED.

WE HAVE A HANDFUL LEFT. SHOULD WE DISPOSE OF THEM?

DISPOSE OF CHILDREN? WE'RE NOT ***MONSTERS***, LIEUTENANT.

"TAKE ME TO THEM."

HELLO. I'M THE MAESTRO. BUT YOU CAN CALL ME "BRUCE."

THEY KILLED THEMSELVES BY FIGHTING ME.

DID YOU... KILL OUR PARENTS?

BUT YOU KNOW WHAT? DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEM.

YOU'RE GOING TO COME WITH ME TO A WHOLE NEW CITY. WE'LL FIND PEOPLE TO TAKE CARE OF YOU AND YOU'LL GROW UP HAPPY.

WHATTAYA SAY?

GRUA!

YOU KILLED OUR PARENTS.

YOU GO TO HELL.

YEAH, GO TO HELL!

GO! TO! HELL!

GO! TO! HELL!

DO WHAT YOU WANT.

GO! TO! HELL! GO! TO! H—

EEYARRHHH!

WELL, MAESTRO? HOW FARED THE EXPEDITION?

AS WELL AS CAN BE EXPECTED. THE STALKERS ARE DISPOSED OF.

THEY REFUSED TO BOW TO YOUR WILL. THEY FORFEITED THEIR RIGHT TO LIVE.

I KNOW, BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH.

YOUR WILL IS *LAW*. HOW CAN IT NOT BE ENOUGH?

BECAUSE THERE ARE OTHERS OUT THERE WHO STILL DREAM OF SOMETHING ELSE!

AND DREAMS BEGET DISASTER. WE'VE SEEN IT! *INDISPUTABLY!*

HUMAN DREAMS HAVE LEFT HUMANITY IN RUINS!

WE...CAN'T STOP PEOPLE FROM *DREAMING*, MAESTRO.

NO. BUT WE CAN *CONTROL* IT.

IN 1962, JFK SAID WE WOULD GO TO THE MOON BY THE END OF THE DECADE. WE HAD NO FUNCTIONING MOON PROGRAM AT THE TIME. NONE.

IN 1969, NEIL ARMSTRONG AND BUZZ ALDRIN WALKED ON THE MOON.

WE NEED THAT KIND OF *FOCUS*. THAT KIND OF *LEADERSHIP*.

AND I HAVE A PLAN...

I MUST ELIMINATE THE REMAINING DIVISION IN HUMANITY.

MAESTRO!

WE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOUR--

NOT NOW!

WHERE WAS I?

ELIMINATE HUMANITY'S DIVISION.

RIGHT, THANKS.

IT'S OBVIOUS HUMANITY CAN'T BE LEFT ON ITS OWN TO RUN THINGS.

IT NEEDS A *SINGLE OVERLORD* TO OVERSEE EVERYTHING.

IN FACT, IT REQUIRES A *POLITICAL MOVEMENT.*

POLITICS? YOU MEAN LIKE... REPUBLICANS? DEMOCRATS? THAT SORT OF THING?

NO, NO, THAT'S LONG DEAD. NO, WE NEED A NEW MOVEMENT.

AND I'VE GOT THE PERFECT NAME: *POST-APOCALYPTIC EXISTENCE.*

PAX, FOR SHORT.

PAX. THE LATIN WORD FOR "*PEACE.*" GOOD CHOICE.

I KNOW.

WE WON'T HAVE DIVISION ANY LONGER. ALL HUMANS WILL ***SWEAR FEALTY*** TO ME AND TO PAX OR BE ***DISPOSED OF.***

WE DON'T NEED DIVERGENT OPINIONS. THAT'S WHAT GETS PEOPLE KILLED.

FREE WILL WAS A NICE IDEA. IT WAS TRIED AND IT FAILED.

PAX WILL RULE OVER ALL.

OVER ALL ***WHAT,*** SIR?

YOU'VE DISPOSED OF THE STALKERS. YOU RULE OVER DYSTOPIA.

THE ***WASTELAND FARMERS*** ARE HARDLY A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH. THEY'RE JUST TRYING TO SURVIVE.

WHAT OTHER--

WASHINGTON, D.C., FOR STARTERS.

THERE'S AN ENTIRE NEST OF SURVIVORS HIDING THERE.

ARE YOU SURE?

SAW THEM MYSELF.

AND THEY HAVE YEARS' WORTH OF SUPPLIES. THEY SAID SO.

THAT COULD BE VERY USEFUL FOR DYSTOPIA.

SO... ARE WE GOING TO CONQUER THEM?

NOT AT FIRST. WE'RE GOING TO INVITE THEM TO JOIN PAX OF THEIR OWN FREE WILL.

AND WHO IS GOING TO EXTEND THIS INVITATION?

FUNNY YOU SHOULD ASK...

HMMM.

THIS COULD PRESENT...

...DIFFICULTIES.

"WE DISCOVERED HIM JUST KIND OF WANDERING AROUND A HALLWAY, SIR."

HE FOUND OUR HIDDEN ENTRANCE?

SEEMS HE KNEW RIGHT WHERE TO LOOK.

HMM.

I KNOW YOU. I HAVE SEEN YOUR IMAGE IN OUR SCREENING OF DYSTOPIA. BUT I DO NOT KNOW YOUR NAME.

I AM THE MINISTER.

THAT IS A TITLE, NOT A NAME.

I AM AARON. AARON STACK. AND YOU ARE--?

...

RALPH.

GREETINGS, RALPH.

WELCOME TO *HAVEN.*

I REPRESENT OUR LEADER, THE MAESTRO.

I BELIEVE YOU CALL HIM THE HULK.

AH YES. HE FIRST DISCOVERED YOUR CITY WHILE VISITING US.

HOW FARES HE?

HE'S DOING WELL.

THIS IS OUR CENTRAL HALL.

IT'S... VERY NICE. WHO IS, *UH*...IN CHARGE?

NO ONE, REALLY. I TEND TO SERVE AS AN ADJUDICATOR. OVERSEE DISPUTES AND SUCH. IT IS BELIEVED THAT, SINCE I AM AN ARTIFICIAL BEING, I CAN REMAIN IMPARTIAL.

THE SOLDIERS KEEP ORDER IN THE RARE INSTANCES THAT IT'S REQUIRED.

SO... TELL ME, RALPH...

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

AND I SUGGEST YOU DO NOT LIE. I AM MONITORING YOUR VITAL SIGNS AND ANY ATTEMPTS AT FALSEHOODS WILL BE *IMMEDIATELY* DETECTED.

I'M HERE TO TELL YOU THAT THE MAESTRO IS GOING TO RULE YOU ALL.

I'M SORRY. COULD YOU SAY THAT AGAIN?

VERY WELL:

?!

?!

THE MAESTRO IS GOING TO RULE YOU ALL...

THE MAESTRO IS GOING TO RULE YOU ALL...

WHAT THE HELL--?!

WHAT THE HELL--?!

OH, I'M USING MY INTERNAL P.A. SYSTEM TO BROADCAST YOU. SAVE TIME.

YOU WERE SAYING...?

I WAS SAYING...

"AT THIS MOMENT THE MAESTRO AND HIS ARMY ARE APPROACHING THE CITY.

"THEY ARE PREPARED TO LAUNCH A FULL ASSAULT.

"YOU WILL TURN THE ENTIRETY OF 'HAVEN' OVER TO HIM.

"SURRENDER ALL YOUR RESOURCES, WHICH WILL BE REDISTRIBUTED.

"THE MAESTRO WILL THEN INTRODUCE HIMSELF AND THE CONDITIONS OF HIS NEW RULE, TO WHICH YOU WILL SUBMIT...

"...WITHOUT QUESTION OR HESITATION.

"OTHERWISE I CAN ASSURE YOU, THERE WILL BE NO SURVIVORS."

I SEE.

AARON? ANY THOUGHTS?

I RECOMMEND OPERATION EGRESS.

MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY.

LET'S DO IT.

OKAY, EVERYONE!

OPERATION EGRESS!

MOVE! MOVE! MOVE!

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW.

ARE YOU GOING TO COMPLY WITH THE MAESTRO'S DEMANDS?

I'M AFRAID NOT.

BUT... WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

TO PREPARE.

ARE THEY GOING TO WELCOME US, SIR?

I DON'T KNOW.

IF THEY'RE SMAR--

NOPE.

PULSE RIFLES. THAT'S ADVANCED.

FOCUS FIRE ON THE MAESTRO!

TAKE HIM!

YOU GENTLEMEN REALLY DON'T KNOW HOW THIS WORKS, DO YOU?

HULK SMASH!

OOOOF!

ARRRHHH!

SIC 'EM.

DAMNATION.

A LITTLE ROLLER UP ALONG FIRST, BEHIND THE BAG...

METS

IT GETS THROUGH BUCKNER!

HERE COMES KNIGHT, AND THE METS WIN IT!

ULYSSES...

I'M BUSY, PARIS.

IT'S DELPHI. SHE'S HAD A VISION.

BANNER IS BACK.

YOU'RE KIDDING.

YOU'VE KNOWN ME A CENTURY, ULYSSES. YOU'RE PERFECTLY AWARE I DON'T KID.

RIGHT, RIGHT.

ATALANTA WANTS TO SEE US.

I'LL BET.

YOU'RE SURE ABOUT THIS, DEL?

COULDN'T BE MORE POSITIVE. HE HAS A BEARD AND LESS HAIR AND CALLS HIMSELF "THE MAESTRO," BUT IT'S DEFINITELY BANNER.

AND WHERE IS HE?

RIGHT NOW? CONQUERING WASHINGTON, D.C.

DID YOU SAY "CONQUERING"?

THAT'S CORRECT, ULYSSES.

SO... WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT THIS?

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT WE'RE DOING. WE'RE GOING TO *STOP HIM*, THAT'S WHAT.

NO, HECTOR.

'LANTA, WHAT DO YOU MEAN "NO"?

I MEAN WE'RE STAYING OUT OF IT, ULYSSES. *THAT'S* WHAT I MEAN.

THE PANTHEON HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO--

TO WHAT? SAVE THE WORLD?

IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T LOOKED OUTSIDE LATELY, THAT SHIP'S SAILED. MAYBE YOU'RE TOO BUSY WATCHING PAST SPORTING EVENTS TO BE AWARE OF IT.

I'M THE LEADER. I SAY WE TAKE NO ACTION.

BUT--

BUT NOTHING.

MAESTRO! THANK GOD!

SHUT UP, MINISTER.

WHAT'S THE MATTER, AARON? AFRAID TO TAKE ME ON, *MAN TO MACHINE MAN?*

GREETINGS, BANNER. SO YOU'RE THE MAESTRO NOW. DISPATCHED THE LAST ONE, I ASSUME?

HE...HE'S GOING TO *KILL ME...* PLEASE--!

NOT AT ALL.

GET HIM OUT OF HERE.

YOU HEARD HIM. GET HIM OUT OF HERE.

LEAVE THE ROBOT--

--TO ME!!!

EH?

CUTE TRICK. ANY OTHERS YOU CARE TO TROT OUT?

PSSHHHHH

A FEW.

GOING TO HIDE NOW, ARE YOU? RUN OFF?

NO.

STRIKE FROM HIDING.

WAAAAAAM

WHERE ARE YOU?!

HERE.

AND HERE.

BUILT-IN HOLO PROJECTOR.

CUTE. VERY CUTE.

BUT THEY'RE JUST IMAGES. THEY CAN DISTRACT ME, BUT NOT HURT ME.

TRUE.

BUT THE *ORIGINAL* CAN STILL DO SOME DAMAGE.

ZWAAC

ARRRRGHHH!!!

HAH! GOT YOU! SHOCKED?

NO. BUT YOU'LL BE.

YARRGGGHHHH!

HUFFFF
HUUUUUFFFF

YOU GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT, SIR?

JUST...WAIT WITH ME A FEW MINUTES...FOR ME TO CATCH MY BREATH.

BUT THE MAESTRO MAY NEED US.

"TRUST ME, LIEUTENANT, THE MAESTRO WILL DO JUST FINE ON HIS OWN."

WHAAAM

WUUUMP

WHAT DID YOU THINK WAS GOING TO HAPPEN HERE?

URK...

DID YOU REALLY... THINK...YOU'D *WIN?*

HRRRGH...

KRUUNK

WELL? DID YOU?

Wasn't... trying to win...just... delay you...

WHAT?

"Project...Egress...Egress means 'exit'...This was to distract and occupy you... so the others...could ***exit***...

"This body...is just a ***duplicate***...as I fly the survivors to a backup base. You'll never find us...

"Oh...a final warning..."

I have a bomb in my chest. It goes off if my body is catastrophically damaged so that no one can...make use of it...

It will detonate in three...two... one...

BU-THOOOOOM

GOOD LORD...

IS... DID THE MAESTRO SURVIVE?

RUMBLE

NO ONE

SAY

A WORD.

ATALANTA. WE'VE BEEN SUMMONING YOU.

I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE BEING SUMMONED.

WE NEED YOU IN THE MONITOR ROOM.

THE MONITOR ROOM? WHY?

WE HAVE A VISITOR.

A... VISI--

PARIS, WE'RE HIDDEN UNDER THE COLUMBIA ICEFIELD. WE DON'T *HAVE* VISITORS.

YES, WELL, APPARENTLY THAT'S CHANGED.

HE'S DEMANDING TO BE LET IN.

HOW THE HELL DOES HE KNOW WE'RE HE--?

WAIT, IS THAT...?

I THINK SO.

PANTHEON! BRING ME IN IMMEDIATELY.

DOCTOR DOOM IS NOT ACCUSTOMED TO BEING MADE TO WAIT...

SO FALLS
THE PANTHEON
...WHO'S NEXT?!

OUTSIDE THE PANTHEON'S SECRET BASE.

FINE. *DOCTOR DOOM* KNOWS WE'RE DOWN HERE. *LET* HIM KNOW.

IGNORE HIM.

BUT, ATALANTA--

WHY DOES EVERYONE KEEP SAYING "BUT"? I TOLD YOU, PARIS, IGNORE HIM. HE'LL GO AWAY.

WAIT... WHERE *IS* HE?

APPARENTLY HE WENT AWAY. WELL, THAT TAKES CARE OF--

IT SEEMS YOU HAVE TROUBLE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS.

HOLY CRAP!

HOW IN THE--?!

IS THAT SOME SORT OF... TRANSPORT DEVICE?

OF A SORT.

war & pax

PART TWO: CROSSING THE RUBICON

WHAT DO YOU WANT, VICTOR?

THAT'S "DOOM" TO YOU. *DOCTOR* DOOM, ACTUALLY.

OH REALLY? DO YOU HAVE A MEDICAL DEGREE? A DOCTORATE OF SOME SORT?

YEAH. THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT. SO MUCH FOR--

ZWAROWWW

WHAT DO YOU WANT, *DOCTOR?*

SOME TEA.

AND TO... CHAT.

FIRST THINGS FIRST. HOW ARE YOU NOT, Y'KNOW...

DEAD?

I AM A TIME-TRAVELER, CHILD. I GO WHERE AND WHEN I WISH. MY TIME MACHINE IS WHAT TRANSPORTED ME IN HERE.

THAT METAL SQUARE IS A *DELOREAN?*

NO. A TIME MACHINE, ***AS I SAID.*** NOW...TO BUSINESS.

I AM AWARE OF THE PANTHEON'S REPUTATION AS AVOWED ***DO-GOODERS.*** YET THE WORLD FELL APART DESPITE YOUR BEST EFFORTS.

I HAVE COME TO SUGGEST A NEW TARGET FOR YOUR UNDERTAKINGS.

THE MAESTRO. FORMERLY DOCTOR BANNER.

AH. YOU'VE HEARD OF HIM.

A LITTLE. YES.

A FORMER ***ALLY*** OF YOURS, AS I RECALL.

THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.

INDEED. WELL, I HAVE SOME INTERESTS IN THIS TIME PERIOD...AND ***HE*** REPRESENTS A ***THREAT*** TO THEM. I WISH HIS THREAT TO BE... ATTENDED TO.

AND WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOUR "INTERESTS"?

THE MAESTRO WISHES TO CONQUER THE WORLD. I WOULD LIKE TO LIVE IN IT.

A TIME-TRAVELER WANTS TO LIVE IN A POST-APOCALYPTIC WASTELAND? GOOD LORD, WHY?

I'M CAPRICIOUS.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS, I KNOW HIS MINDSET. HE WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD.

HE WILL FIND OUT ABOUT ME AND YOU. HE WILL SEE US AS OPPONENTS TO HIS DESIRES. I SUGGEST WE TAKE PREEMPTIVE STEPS.

HOW? HE'S GOT BANNER'S BRAINS, THE HULK'S STRENGTH AND, OH YES...HE'S *IMMORTAL.*

AS ARE YOU.

WE'RE LONG LIVED, BUT WE AGE. WE DIE. THE HULK... NOT SO MUCH.

WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST WE DO? CARPET BOMB THE WHOLE OF DYSTOPIA? *KILL* THE POPULATION?

MIGHT BE WORTH IT.

HECTOR, FOR GOD'S SAKE--

WE'RE NOT KILLING A CITY OF INNOCENTS. PLUS WE DON'T HAVE ANY BOMBS THAT COULD STOP BANNER ANYWAY.

PARIS... YOU LOOK THOUGHTFUL. CARE TO SHARE?

YOU PUT YOUR FINGER ON IT. ***BANNER.*** NOT THE MAESTRO. THE MAESTRO MAY BE INVINCIBLE, BUT BANNER WE CAN HANDLE.

MEANING...?

WE RESTORE HIM TO HIS ***HUMAN FORM.*** IF WE CAN DO THAT, WE CAN TAKE HIM DOWN. KILL HIM. OR AT LEAST IMPRISON HIM.

I LIKE THIS PLAN.

WE JUST HAVE TO DETERMINE... HOW.

ALCHEMAX.

MAESTRO?

MAESTRO? ARE YOU HERE? MAESTRO, WHERE ARE Y--?

RAAWWRRR!!!

ARGGHHH!

NO! NO!!!

HEEL.

MINISTER, YOU SCREAM LIKE A *CHILD*. DID YOU KNOW THAT? A FIVE-YEAR-OLD *CHILD*.

I THOUGHT I WAS DEAD.

WELL, THE DAY'S YOUNG.

I'M REBUILDING MY DOGS OF WAR. LOST A NUMBER OF THEM IN THAT D.C. EXPLOSION.

YES. A TRAGEDY.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

I CAME TO FETCH YOU BACK TO THE PALACE.

ANY REASON? OR YOU JUST MISSED ME?

YOU HAVE VISITORS.

ANYONE IN PARTICULAR?

THEY INTRODUCED THEMSELVES. THEY HAD VERY ODD NAMES. VERY *OLD* ONES.

OF HEROES, MOSTLY.

THEY SAID THEY WERE CALLED THE... PARTHENON, I THINK.

THE *PANTHEON?*

YES, THAT WAS IT. WHO ARE THEY?

THEY'RE FRIENDS!

YOU MEAN LIKE... *ACTUAL* FRIENDS? OR WAS THAT SOME SARCASTIC--?

YES. ACTUAL FRIENDS. I DO HAVE THEM, YOU KNOW.

OF--OF COURSE, SIRE.

THASSA BIG CHAIR.

IT IS INDEED, AJAX.

KEN I SIDDOWN ON IT?

I WOULDN'T IF I WERE YOU.

ARE YEW ME?

UH... NO...

THEN KEN I SIDDOWN ON IT?

AH...I WOULDN'T.

OKAY, BUD WHADDABOUD *ME?*

GOD, IT'S ABBOTT AND COSTELLO IN REAL LIFE.

AJAX, JUST DON'T SIT THERE, OKAY?

OOOOOKAY...

GEEZ!

THUDD

WOOOMF

OHHHH, HERE WE GO...

AJAX, NO! WAIT--!!!

WHAT WAS THAT NOISE...?

KEE-RAAAAAASH

ARRRHH!

YOOORE NOT GONNA HURD ADLANNA!

AJAX! CALM THE HELL DOWN!

IT'S ME! *BRUCE BANNER! THE HULK!*

HULK?

YES!

OF COURSE I'M NOT GONNA HURT HER, YOU MORON!

YEW LOOK DIF'RENT.

WELL, IT *HAS* BEEN NEARLY A *CENTURY!*

OH. IZZAT LONG?

=SIGH= YES, IT'S LONG.

GET OFF ME, YOU LUMMOX.

AJAX, HE'S OUR FRIEND. WE DON'T WANT TO ATTACK HIM.

BUT HE 'TACKED *US!*

I DIDN'T *ATTACK* YOU. I JUST DROPPED IN THROUGH THE SKYLIGHT.

I LIKE TO MAKE AN ENTRANCE.

ULYSSES. PARIS, HECTOR-- GODS, YOU LOOK AMAZING.

WELL, YOU CERTAINLY HAVE A KNACK FOR IT.

HAVING A GOD FOR AN ANCESTOR WILL DO THAT.

SO YOU GO BY "THE MAESTRO" NOW.

EH. IT'S A TITLE. AN OLD ONE.

IT SUITS YOU.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU HAVE COMPANY?

BEFORE TODAY?

YEAH.

NEVER.

YOU HUNGRY?

NO.

FAMISHED.

GLAD TO HEAR IT. WE SET A FINE TABLE HERE EVERY TIME WE HAVE COMPANY.

WELL, I GUESS YOUR LUCK RAN OUT THEN.

SO WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? THE LAST I KNEW OF YOU GUYS, ***THE MOUNT*** BLEW UP. DID YOU REBUILD...?

THE MOUNT MAY HAVE BEEN OUR MAIN HEADQUARTERS, BUT THAT DIDN'T MEAN WE HAD NO BACKUPS.

WE'RE BELOW THE COLUMBIA ICEFIELD NOW.

IN CANADA?

EXACTLY.

WHAT'S THAT LIKE?

WELL, EVERYONE'S MORE POLITE.

OF COURSE. GOES WITHOUT SAYING.

IF PRO SPORTS WERE STILL AROUND, WE'D BE FIELDING A HOCKEY TEAM.

NATURALLY.

SO TELL ME ABOUT "PAX."

POST-APOCALYPTIC EXISTENCE. PRETTY STRAIGHTFORWARD.

EVERYONE DOES WHAT I TELL THEM TO. AND WE ALL LIVE IN PEACE.

SOUNDS GREAT!

I LOVE IT!

WE'RE IN!

YOU KNOW THAT NOT EVERYBODY'S GOING TO EMBRACE IT, THOUGH.

REALLY? LIKE WHO?

HAVE YOU HEARD OF... *A.I.M.*?

HEARD OF THEM? THEY'RE THE REASON I'M HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE.

THEIR LEADER, THIS HUGE FLOATING HEAD NAMED *M.O.D.O.K.*, PUT ME IN HYPERSLEEP.

STASHED ME IN THEIR UNDERGROUND HEADQUARTERS.

HOW DID YOU ESCAPE?

ESCAPE? PARIS, WHEN I WANT TO LEAVE SOMEPLACE, THEY HAVE NO CHANCE OF STOPPING ME.

"IN FACT, I RETURNED THERE AND SPRUNG SOMEONE ELSE THEY HAD PRISONER: A WOMAN NAMED '*VAPOR.*' I HAD... NEED OF HER SERVICES."

WHAT SORT OF NEED?

DOESN'T MATTER. THE POINT IS, THEY TRIED TO STOP ME FROM LEAVING BOTH TIMES.

AND THEY *FAILED* BOTH TIMES.

WELL, AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, WE NEED TO TAKE A.I.M. OFF THE MAP OR THIS'LL NEVER WORK.

WHAT'S YOUR INTEREST IN A.I.M.?

WE'VE HAD SOME DUSTUPS WITH THEM.

DUST-UPS?

THEY KILLED PROMETHEUS.

NOBODY KILLS ONE OF US AND GETS AWAY WITH IT.

BUT WE'VE NO IDEA WHERE THEIR HEADQUARTERS IS.

INTERESTING.

SO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SOME PAYBACK.

THEN YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE.

VERY NICE.

WELL, IT GETS US WHERE WE WANT TO GO.

ALL WE'LL NEED YOU TO DO IS PROGRAM OUR MISSILES' TARGETS. THEY'LL DO THE REST.

CAN THEY PENETRATE THAT DEEP?

THEY'RE BUNKER BUSTERS. THEY COULD PENETRATE TO THE EARTH'S CORE IF WE NEEDED THEM TO.

PARIS, GET US AIRBORNE.

WILL DO.

SMOOTH TAKEOFF.

WELL, PARIS IS THE BEST PILOT...AFTER PRO.

HOW DID PROMETHEUS DIE, ANYWAY?

I DON'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT IT.

REALLY.

AJAX. HOW DID PROMETHEUS DIE?

HE GOD SICK. IT WAS SAD.

SO NO ONE KILLED HIM.

NO. WHY?

AJAX, YOU'RE NOT REMEMBERING CORRECTLY. PROMETHEUS WAS KILLED BY--

URKH!

SOMEBODY TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON...

...BEFORE I *BREAK* HER NECK.

AH. SO THAT'S HOW IT'S GOING TO BE, *HUH?*

PUT HER DOWN, DOCTOR.

MAKE ME.

I WON'T HAVE TO. YOU'RE GOING TO DROP HER ON YOUR OWN.

AND WHY WOULD I DO--

--THAT?

GASP!

WHY DID MY ARM STOP...STOP WORKING...

GEDDING... HARDER TO...TO SPEEEEK...

WUD'S... HAP... NING...

HIGH-POWERED KNOCKOUT GAS. THE CABIN IS FILLED WITH IT.

IT COULD TAKE OUT A HERD OF BLUE WHALES. IT CAN HANDLE *YOU*.

WE'RE ALL WEARING NOSE FILTERS, SO WE'RE IMMUNE.

I'LL...TEAR THIS...PLANE... APAAART...

WOOOMFF

IT SEEMS MY KNOCKOUT DRUG DID THE TRICK.

IT DID INDEED.

YOO OKAY?

I'M FINE. I'M FINE.

PHASE ONE IS COMPLETE.

NOW ON TO *PHASE TWO...*

GET WELL SOON!!!

BEEP BEEP

THE BLACK SCYTHE

PART ONE

BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BE

THE PANTHEON'S MEDICAL FACILITIES.
YEARS AGO.

DELPHI...

YOU'RE NOT RESPONSIBLE.

YES, ULYSSES...

I AM.

DEL...?

I'M HERE, PROMETHEUS.

THIS... THIS IS...

BEEP BEEP

...ALL... YOUR FAULT...

BEEP BEEP

BEEP BEEP

BEEP BEEP

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PROMETHEUS, COME ON!

YOU TOLD ME...TO TRACK...BLACK SCYTHE...TOLD ME...ABOUT PHILLY...

...DIDN'T MENTION... IT'D KILL ME... YOU...FAILED... YOU...

BEEEEEEEEE

I DIDN'T KNOW...I DIDN'T SEE THAT PART... I'D...I'D HAVE NEVER...

I KNOW. I KNOW...

IS HE...?

IT'S OVER. HE'S GONE.

HE MAY BE GONE...

...BUT IT'S NOT OVER. NOT BY A DAMNED LONG SHOT.

SITUATION ROOM IN FIVE MINUTES.

NO! NO TIME.

WE FAILED TO STOP THE WORLD FROM BLOWING ITSELF UP. WE FAILED TO STOP THE BLACK SCYTHE FROM KILLING MILLIONS MORE.

AND NOW THEY KILLED ONE OF US.

LANTA, GIVE US SOME TIME TO--

THAT MEANS *VENGEANCE.*

WE KILL THEM, ULYSSES. THE ENTIRE BLACK SCYTHE DIES. FIVE MINUTES--TELL EVERYONE.

WE'RE ENDING THIS. NO MATTER WHAT.

MAESTRO: WAR & PAX #3

OKAY. WE CAUGHT HIM.

NOW WHAT?

I WAS HOPING HE WOULD *REVERT* ONCE HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS. THAT HIS *BRUCE BANNER* PERSONALITY WOULD REASSERT ITSELF.

YES, WELL, OBVIOUSLY THAT'S NOT HAPPENING, 'LANTA.

MAYBE WE CAN JUST KEEP HIM LIKE THIS INDEFINITELY.

YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT, HECTOR? HE ESCAPED *A.I.M.*-- YOU THINK HE WON'T ESCAPE US?

WE'RE SITTING ON A TWENTY-MEGATON BOMB HERE. SOONER OR LATER, HE'S GOING TO GO OFF. YOU REALLY WANT TO BE CAUGHT IN THE BLAST?

NO, WHAT WE NEED IS A WAY INTO HIS MIND.

AS THE MAESTRO, HE'S INVULNERABLE. BUT IF WE TURN HIM BACK INTO BANNER, WE CAN *HURT* HIM. THE PLAN HASN'T CHANGED.

AND THERE'S ONLY ONE GUY WHO CAN DO IT.

I'LL TALK TO HIM.

DELPHI, HE'S NOT GOING TO WANT TO--

I'LL TALK TO HIM.

YOU KNEW IT WOULD LIKELY COME TO THIS.

I THOUGHT WE'D FIND SOME OTHER WAY.

I KNOW YOU CAN DO IT.

I'M AN EMPATH BY NATURE.

YOUR POWERS HAVE GROWN. YOU'RE ALSO A *TELEPATH* NOW.

IT'S INVASIVE. IT MAKES ME UNCOMFORTABLE.

PLEASE, PARIS...

FOR ME?

ZAAAAAKK

OKAY. IT'S LOCKED IN PLACE.

I HATE THIS.

YES, YOU'VE MADE THAT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR.

HOW'D YOU TALK HIM INTO IT?

I HAVE MY WAYS, ULYSSES.

UH-HUH.

LOOK, CAN I HELP IT IF MEN ARE STUPID AND EASY TO CONTROL?

EXCUSE ME?

YOU HEARD ME.

I HATE YOU.

NO, YOU DON'T.

SHUT UP.

YOU SHUT UP.

FINE.

DOCTOR BANNER...

DOCTOR BANNER...

CAN YOU HEAR ME?

DOCTOR BANNER...

NO. NOT DOCTOR BANNER.

MAESTRO. I'M...

WHERE AM I?

WAIT. I KNOW THIS PLACE. THIS IS...

THIS IS THE PANTHEON'S OLD HEADQUARTERS... *THE MOUNT.* BUT... BUT IT WAS *DESTROYED.*

NICE TO KNOW THAT YOU REMEMBER IT, DOCTOR BANNER.

I TOLD YOU, I DON'T GO BY THAT NAME ANYMORE.

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU GO BY. IT'S *WHO YOU ARE.*

FOLLOW ME.

THIS ISN'T HAPPENING. THIS IS SOME SORT OF *DREAMSCAPE,* ISN'T IT?

YOU'RE TRYING TO TRICK ME. IT'S NOT GOING TO WORK.

ARE YOU COMING?

IT'S NOT GOING TO WORK!!!

...ARE YOU COMING?

SIGH

FIIIIINE.

YOU DOUBTLESS THINK THAT THE PANTHEON FIRST BECAME INTERESTED IN YOU BACK WHEN ALL YOUR PERSONALITIES MERGED.

THAT'S WHAT YOU TOLD ME.

YES, WELL, THAT WAS A *LIE*.

WE HAD ALREADY BEEN WATCHING YOU FOR QUITE SOME TIME.

PULL UP *FILE TIH-312*.

THAT'S... THAT'S...

HE'S A MONSTER! A ***MONSTER,*** I'M TELLING YOU!

YOUR FATHER BRIAN, YES. HE WAS QUITE A BRILLIANT PHYSICIST.

DEVELOPING WAYS TO SAFELY HARNESS NUCLEAR ENERGY. SO WE KEPT AN EYE ON HIM.

BUT THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF YOUR BIRTH ACCELERATED OUR INTEREST.

SHUT IT OFF.

PLUS ***ANDROMEDA,*** DELPHI'S MOTHER, HAD A VISION OF YOU.

SO WHEN YOUR MOTHER REBECCA DIED...

OR, MORE CORRECTLY, WHEN YOUR FATHER ***KILLED*** HER, WE TOOK STEPS TO--

I SAID ***SHUT IT OFF!!!***

KRAAASH

IS THIS ALL SOME KIND OF ***GAME*** TO YOU?

I'M TRYING TO EXPLAIN TO YOU THE STEPS WE TOOK TO--

I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR *STEPS...*

...OR YOUR EXPLANATIONS...

...OR YOU!!!

SOMETHING'S GOING WRONG! HE'S LOSING CONTROL!

CUT THE FEED! *CUT THE FEED!*

DIDN'T YOU HEAR HER? *CUT THE FEED!!!*

I'M TRYING! I CAN'T ACCESS THE CONNECTION!

HE'S *LOCKED IN!*

WELL, *UN*LOCK HIM!!!

...TRYING TO...TO... TELL YOU... THAT...

SAVE IT.

KRAAK

NO!

BANNER'S AWAKE!!!

KRAAASH

I TOLD YOU. THE NAME IS...

MAESTRO!!!

'LANTA, RUN! I'VE GOT THIS!

OWWW! OH, YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT, YOU LITTLE--

ARRHHHHH!!!

CUT HIS HEAD OFF! HURRY!!!

I DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE TO DO THIS--

DON'T WORRY. YOU WON'T.

SLIIICE

NOOOO!!!

OOOOOFFF!!!

THERRRRRRE WE GO.

IS SUBJECT RB1 OUT OF DEEP FREEZE?

ROGER THAT.

THEN GET 'ER DOWN HERE! NOW! RIGHT--

ARRRRRHHH!!!

ULYSSES!

GOTTA HAND IT TO YOU. I DIDN'T THINK YOUR SWORD COULD PENETRATE MY SKIN. YOU'VE IMPROVED IT.

BUT IT GOES THROUGH YOU MUCH EASIER.

UNHHHH!!!

DIE, YOU MONSTER! JUST FREAKING DIE!!!

I AM GOING TO TAKE THAT PLASMA BOW OF YOURS AND SHOVE IT SO FAR UP YOUR BACKSIDE THAT YOUR VOICE WILL QUIVER.

SEE WHAT I DID THERE? WITH THE WHOLE "QUIVER" THING--?

DON YOU HURD LANNA!!!

YOU'RE THE ONE I ALWAYS FELT THE SORRIEST FOR, AJAX...

...BECAUSE YOU WERE JUST TOO *STUPID* TO KNOW ANY BETTER.

NOT STOOOPID! JUST CARE 'BOUT--

ATALANTA, YES, I KNOW.

YOU WANT HER SO MUCH?

HAVE HER!

NO!!!

KRUULUNK

NO... NOOOO...

DON'T WORRY, BIG GUY...IT'LL ALL BE OVER IN A--

BRUCE?

WHAT? WHAT'RE YOU--?

NO...NO, IT'S...IT'S NOT...

...IT'S NOT POSSIBLE...

OH MY GOD...BRUCE? IS THAT...?

MY GOD, WHAT HAVE THEY *DONE* TO YOU?

HE DID IT TO HIMSELF, REBECCA. YOUR LITTLE BOY...DIDN'T TURN OUT SO WELL.

THIS...THIS CAN'T BE... YOU'RE...

YOU'RE *DEAD*... DAD *KILLED YOU*... HOW...?

WHAT... *ARE* YOU? YOU'RE NOT MY BRUCE! YOU'RE NOT MY--

NO... MOM... IT'S ME... I'M...

SEE? IT'S ME! IT'S BRUCE. IT'S--

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

I'LL BE DAMNED.

IT WORKED.

HE BOUGHT THE WHOLE THING.

INDEED HE DID. HE THOUGHT HE BROKE OUT OF YOUR MIND CONTROL AND FELL FOR THE REST.

SERIOUSLY? YOU'RE CHECKING?

YES.

DUDE, WE KILLED HIM!

OKAY. WE KILLED HIM.

NOW WHAT?

NOW WE MAKE IT PERMANENT.

MAESTRO: WAR & PAX #4

CITIZENS OF DYSTOPIA...

...YOUR LIVES ARE ABOUT TO BE FOREVER CHANGED.

GREET YOUR NEW RULER...

DOCTOR VICTOR VON DOOM!

YOU MAY APPROACH AND PLEDGE YOUR OBEISANCE.

OUR WHAT?

YOUR OBEISANCE.

OBEY-SUNCE? IS THAT A WORD?

YES. IT MEANS--

YEAH, NO ONE CARES.

HMM. PERHAPS I SHOULD KILL SEVERAL OF THEM TO GARNER THEIR ATTENTION.

NO. TOO PREDICTABLE. IT IS A NEW CENTURY, AND I SHOULD TRY THINGS...

...DIFFERENTLY.

UHM... HELLO. MAY I HELP YOU WITH SOMETHING?

I AM DOCTOR DOOM. YOUR *NEW RULER.*

I...I'M SORRY? WE ALREADY HAVE A RULER.

YOU *DID.*

STEP ASIDE, PLEASE.

I WARN YOU, OUR RULER, ***THE MAESTRO***, WON'T TAKE WELL TO THIS INTERCESSION...

I DON'T CARE WHAT HE WILL TAKE TO. HE IS IRRELEVANT, YOU SEE.

"IRRELEVANT"?

CORRECT.

HE'S GOING TO BE BACK BEFORE TOO LONG...

I DOUBT THAT. THE PANTHEON HAS *CAPTURED* HIM.

NO, THEY HAVEN'T.

YOU'LL FIND MATTERS WILL GO FAR MORE EFFICIENTLY IF YOU STOP DISAGREEING WITH EVERYTHING I SAY.

THEY'VE... CAPTURED HIM?

YES.

BUT...THEY WON'T HOLD HIM. THEY CAN'T.

YOU MAY BE RIGHT.

WE WILL HAVE TO SEE.

THIS IS A BAD IDEA.

YES, ULYSSES, WE KNOW YOU THINK THIS IS A BAD IDEA. THE FIRST ***NINE TIMES*** YOU SAID THAT, IT DIDN'T SINK IN, BUT NOW WE'RE FINALLY GETTING IT.

MAKE ALL THE JOKES YOU WANT, LANTA, BUT WHEN HE BREAKS FREE AND KILLS YOU, I DOUBT YOU'LL BE JOKING ANYMORE.

war & pax

PART FOUR:

PAX VOBISCUM

THAT ALLOY IS *DURANIUM*, ULYSSES. IT'S THE TOUGHEST METAL WE'VE GOT.

WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST WE DO?

WE CUT HIM TO PIECES, THAT'S WHAT. SEPARATE HIS HEAD, ARMS AND LEGS FROM HIS BODY.

THAT WON'T HELP.

HOW CAN THAT NOT HELP?! HE'S A HUMAN NOW! WE CAN CUT HIS BODY APART. HELL, WE CAN RUN IT THROUGH A WOOD CHIPPER.

HE GOT SHOT IN THE HEAD AND THE HEART. THAT DIDN'T KILL HIM.

HIS REGENERATION CAPABILITIES ARE UNKNOWN.

MEANING...?

MEANING IF YOU CUT HIM INTO HALF A DOZEN PIECES, WE MIGHT WIND UP WITH HALF A DOZEN HULKS TO DEAL WITH.

THAT WOULDN'T HAPPEN.

CARE TO BET YOUR LIFE ON IT? BECAUSE I DON'T.

YOU'RE BEING PARANOID.

BEING PARANOID DOESN'T MEAN THEY'RE NOT OUT TO GET YOU. WE SEAL HIM IN DURANIUM...

...THAT SHOULD TAKE CARE OF HIM.

BRUCE. BRUCE, WAKE UP.

LEONARD?

BUT... YOU'RE DEAD.

SINCE WHEN IS THAT AN ISSUE?

ALTHOUGH THE PANTHEON *IS* TRYING TO KILL YOU.

AGAIN.

HOW?

THEY'RE ENCASING YOU IN DURANIUM. THEY FIGURE THAT COULD SMOTHER YOU.

AND WHEN IT HARDENS, IT'LL ENCASE YOU.

CAN I STOP THEM?

MAYBE. QUESTION IS:

DO YOU WANT TO?

HOW MUCH DO YOU REALLY WANT TO LIVE, BRUCE?

...

YOU MEWLING, SPINELESS QUITTER.

WHAT, YOU SAW YOUR MOTHER AND SUDDENLY A LIFETIME OF INADEQUACY REARS ITS HEAD?

HAVEN'T I TAUGHT YOU ANYTHING?

YOU'RE BETTER THAN SAMSON HERE. BETTER THAN YOUR PARENTS. BETTER THAN ANYONE WHO EVER TRIED TO "HELP" YOU.

ALL THEY DID WAS *WEAKEN* YOU.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

SHUT UP.

THIS IS WHO YOU LISTEN TO, BANNER?

IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, THE PANTHEON IS TRYING TO END YOU.

SAMSON DOESN'T CARE. DEAD MOM DOESN'T CARE.

BUT I CARE.

SNAAAP

WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO REALIZE WHO YOUR FRIENDS ARE, BRUCE?

ALL THE PEOPLE YOU'VE MET...BETTY, RICK, THE AVENGERS-- ALL OF THEM...

THEY'VE ALL BEEN TRYING TO WEAKEN YOU BECAUSE THEY'RE *AFRAID* OF YOU.

AFRAID?

OF WHAT YOU CAN DO, WHAT YOU CAN BE...

...WHEN YOU RELEASE ME, TRUST IN ME.

PUT ALL THE RESPONSIBILITY IN MY HANDS.

IT'S DONE. HE'S ENCASED.

WE LEFT AN AIR HOLE, SO HE SHOULD BE OKAY.

CAN HE BREATHE?

AND HE CAN'T BREAK OUT? YOU'RE SURE?

POSITIVE.

THEY THINK THEY HAVE YOU.

SHOW THEM, BRUCE. SHOW THEM WHO'S IN CHARGE.

SHOW THEM...

...WHO'S THE STRONGEST ONE THERE IS.

ALERT THE PANTHEON-- WE HAVE A PROBLEM!

READINGS ARE OFF THE CHARTS!

IT DOESN'T MATTER. EVEN IF HE TRANSFORMS, HE CAN'T BREAK OUT OF SOLID DUR--

KRAKOOOOM

MY GOD. HE'S *BIGGER.*

WE ARE SO SCREWED.

I TOLD YOU, I TOLD YOU...

OH, SHUT UP.

NOW, LET'S SEE... WHERE WAS THAT MISSILE ROOM...?

AH. THIS LOOKS LIKE IT.

BACK AWAY! RIGHT NOW!!

YOU ARE HARDLY IN A POSITION TO GIVE ORDERS.

PUDDERDOWN! RIDENOW!

YOU WANT TO SAVE HER? FIRE THE MISSILES AT A.I.M. THAT WAS OUR DEAL.

I KEEP MY WORD. DO YOU?

I'LL DO IT! JUST DON'T HURT HER.

ULYSSES, NO!

NO CHOICE, LANTA. SORRY.

SIR... YOU'RE...

I'M DOING WHAT I SAID I WOULD. THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.

WHAT'S THE MATTER, ATALANTA? AREN'T YOU AFRAID TO DIE?

AFRAID? I DESERVE TO DIE! WE ALL DO!

THE WORLD ENDED, AND WE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING TO STOP IT!

WE SHOULD ALL BE *DEAD!*

YOUR CALL.

KRUZ

I GAVE HER HER WISH.

I KNEW YOU WOULD.

AND I DID WHAT I SAID. I LAUNCHED ONE SET OF MISSILES AT A.I.M.

ONE SET?

YES. WE HAVE MULTIPLE MISSILES.

WHERE DID YOU FIRE THE SECOND SET?

I'D LEAVE IF I WERE YOU.

A.I.M.'S UNDERGROUND BASE.

WHY ARE THE ALARMS SOUNDING?

INCOMING MISSILES, M.O.D.O.K., SIR!

A TYPE I'VE NEVER SEEN!

I HAVE. THEY ARE BUNKER BUSTERS...

DESIGNED TO DELIVER THEIR PAYLOAD TO SUBTERRANEAN TARGETS.

WH-WHAT DO WE DO?

WE DIE.

BUT WE SHALL BE AVENGED.

IRONIC. AFTER ALL THESE YEARS...

WE BECOME THE AVENGERS.

IT'S OVER. FINALLY.

BRAKOOOOM

HEY THERE.

YEARS AGO.

THE FINAL DAYS ARE HERE, MY FRIENDS!

THE BLACK SCYTHE PART TWO

SEE FOR YOURSELVES. SEE THE RESULTS OF PROGRESSIVE ATTITUDES. SEE THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL THAT THE WORLD HAS UNDERTAKEN FOR THE PAST DECADES.

AND WE OF THE *BLACK SCYTHE* WILL STAND TOGETHER IN ORDER TO--

WHAT IN THE--?

YOUR LEADERS HAVE PROVEN THAT YOU CAN'T COUNT ON THEM. YOU CAN ONLY COUNT ON THE WEAPONS ON YOUR SHOULDERS.

BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA

EVERYONE, CALM DOWN.

AHH!!!

BARRY

BUK-KOOOOM

IT'S EMPTY!!!

NO ONE'S INSIDE!

WHAT PURPOSE WOULD IT SERVE TO...

A DISTRACTION.

BE ON THE ALERT! AN ATTACK IS GOING TO COME FROM SOME OTHER DIRECT--

THOOOM

BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA

LANNA? YEW OKAY?

I'M FINE, AJAX.

HNNGH!

AAH!

HEY!

LET'S GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!

HI. LET'S TALK.

YOU HAD A GOOD RUN, MAESTRO, BUT NOW DYSTOPIA BELONGS TO ***DOOM!***

MAESTRO: WAR & PAX #5

MY PEOPLE. MY BELOVED CITIZENS. HOW THEY LOOK UP TO ME...

LITERALLY.

A.I.M. THOUGHT THEY COULD KEEP ME LOCKED UP INDEFINITELY.

THE PANTHEON THOUGHT THE SAME THING.

THEY BOTH LEARNED OTHERWISE.

NO ONE CAN STOP ME.

IN THE POST-APOCALYPTIC WORLD IN WHICH WE EXIST, I AM THE *ULTIMATE POWER.*

OH. YOU'RE BACK.

OF COURSE I'M BACK. WHO SAID I WOULDN'T BE?

HIM.

DOOM!

WELL, WELL...

LOOK WHO FINALLY SHOWED UP.

War & Pax

PART FIVE: VICI

DOCTOR.
DOCTOR.
HUNGRY?
FAMISHED.
WELL! LET'S ATTEND TO THAT, SHALL WE?

SO MY PLAN WORKED PERFECTLY, YES?

THEY TOSSED IN A FEW WRINKLES WE WEREN'T EXPECTING.

SUCH AS?

THEY TRIED TO SCREW WITH MY MIND.

HOW?

DOESN'T MATTER. THEY FAILED.

AND A.I.M.?

BLOWN TO HELL.

SO WE ACCOMPLISHED ALL OUR GOALS.

WE DID INDEED.

WORKING TOGETHER, WE DISPOSED OF THE LAST TWO ORGANIZATIONS THAT COULD IMPEDE US.

AND NOW WE CAN UNITE AND RULE THE WORLD.

YEAH. ABOUT THAT...

WHAT DOES *THAT* MEAN?

IT MEANS I POISONED YOUR WINE.

URKH.

SEE, I WAS NEVER REALLY GOOD WITH THE WHOLE "WORKING WITH OTHERS" THING.

I'M SURPRISED YOU'D FALL FOR IT, WHAT WITH YOU BEING SUCH A ***GENIUS*** AND ALL.

I MEAN, POISONING HERCULES WAS EASY. HE WAS STRONG ON THE OUTSIDE BUT NORMAL INSIDE.

BUT YOU...

I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DIDN'T SEE IT COMING.

...I DID.

BLAKOWW

KE-RAAAH!!

I TOOK AN ANTITOXIN BEFORE SWALLOWING A SINGLE BITE. I KNEW YOU'D POISON SOMETHING I WOULD EAT OR DRINK.

YOU CAN'T DISPOSE OF ME THAT EASILY.

LET US SEE HOW THE POWER OF A THOUSAND LIGHTNING STORMS FARES AGAINST YOU.

ZZZT KA-KOOM ZZZT

IT DOESN'T!

THOOOM

IMPRESSIVE.

YOU'RE STRONG, I'LL GRANT YOU THAT. STRONGER THAN WHEN WE'VE FOUGHT BEFORE.

BUT THERE'S MORE TO WINNING A BATTLE THAN STRENGTH.

THERE'S ***STRATEGY.*** THERE'S KNOWING YOUR OPPONENT'S ***WEAKNESSES.***

AND THEN THERE'S JUST THE MATTER OF ***HAVING FUN.***

KRAAASH

MANAGED... TO STEER MY FLIGHT...

THAT COUNTS FOR SOMETHING, I GUESS.

LANDED IN THE ALCHEMAX BUILDING...

...WHICH IS EXACTLY WHERE I WANTED TO BE.

WELL! THIS IS AN INTERESTING FACILITY. I CAN MAKE USE OF MUCH OF WHAT'S HERE.

NOW, LET'S SEE... WHERE IS HE HIDING?

AH. ONE FLOOR DOWN. EXCELLENT.

DID YOU THINK YOU WOULD GET AWAY THAT EASILY?

YOU ARE LOOKING UPON THE *NEW RULER* OF DYSTOPIA, BANNER.

NOTHING YOU CAN DO WILL CHANGE THAT.

WANNA BET?

KLK

SEE, YOU FORGOT ONE OTHER ASPECT OF WINNING A BATTLE:

CHOOSING YOUR SURROUNDINGS.

THE CASTLE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH THAT WOULD HELP ME WIN THIS BOUT.

ALCHEMAX PROVES OTHERWISE.

WH-WHAT'S HAPPENING?

AND THE NAME ISN'T "BANNER" ANYMORE...

IT'S "*MAESTRO.*"

LIKE THE ELECTROMAGNETS? PRETTY IMPRESSIVE, *HUH?*

AAARGH!

THAT ARMOR MAKES YOU A PRETTY FORMIDABLE OPPONENT.

I'M THINKING WITHOUT IT, YOU'RE MUCH LESS SO.

WHEN HE WAS IN HIS ARMOR, HE WOULDN'T HAVE FELT THIS PUNCH.

PRETTY SURE HE'S FEELING IT NOW. HEARD A FEW BONES CRACK JUST THEN.

AND NOW I JUST HEARD A BUNCH MORE.

HMM. YOU LOOK PRETTY BANGED UP THERE, VIC.

YOU KNOW, I'M STARTING TO FEEL PLEASED THE POISON DIDN'T WORK. THIS IS MUCH MORE ENTERTAI--

OH MY GOD...YOUR FACE...

DID...*I* DO THAT...?

NO, YOU IDIOT. REED RICHARDS DID.

SHWANAM

DAMNATION... THINK ONE OF MY...LEGS IS BROKEN.

GOT TO GET... OUT OF HERE...

UHNNNN...

OH NO YOU DON'T...

THE HELL--?!

SOME SORT OF... MATTER TRANSMITTER DEVICE. HOW VERY *STAR TREK.*

HE HAD AN EMERGENCY EXIT PLANNED, JUST IN CASE.

SMART FELLOW.

HOPEFULLY HE'LL BE SUFFICIENTLY SMART AND STAY OUT OF MY WAY.

BECAUSE IF HE EVER USES HIS TECH AGAIN TO TRY SOMETHING IN THE FUTURE...

...HE'S GOING TO FIND IT A VERY *IMPERFECT* FUTURE.

THE END.

EPILOGUE:
THE REMAINS OF THE
FORMER A.I.M. BASE.

0

THE BLACK SCYTHE PART THREE

YEARS AGO.

WHO ARE YOU?

ATALANTA. LEADER OF THE PANTHEON.

THE WHO?

THE BLACK SCYTHE *KILLED* A MEMBER OF MY FAMILY.

WE'VE KILLED A LOT OF PEOPLE.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO DISPENSE WITH ME, GO AHEAD. I'M PREPARED TO MEET MY END.

KILLUM.

YOU MISSED.

AND ANYWAY, DID YOU REALLY THINK THAT DISPOSING OF ME WOULD PUT AN END TO US?

RIGHT NOW WE HAVE RALLIES GOING ON IN--

WASHINGTON, DC, AND CHICAGO. OR WHAT'S LEFT OF THEM. YES, I KNOW.

YOU...YOU KNOW? *HOW* DO YOU KNOW?

SERVERS EVERYWHERE WERE DESTROYED. NINETY PERCENT OF THE INTERNET DOESN'T FUNCTION ANYMORE.

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?

"WE HAVE A TALENTED NAKED WOMAN WITH A POOL OF WATER.

"AND WE HAVE OTHER MEMBERS...

"...WHO ARE DISPATCHING THE REST OF YOUR FOLLOWERS.

"WE'RE VERY GOOD AT CLEANING UP AFTER THE FACT."

BUT I STILL WANT TO KNOW *WHY*. WITH HUMANITY TEETERING ON THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS...

...WHY DID YOU FEEL THE NEED TO PUSH IT OVER?

ARE YOU A SKRULL? SOME SUPER VILLAIN?

I'M A STOCK-BROKER.

OR I WAS.

A STOCK-BROKER? SERIOUSLY?

YES. SERIOUSLY.

AND... THAT'S WHY YOU DECIDED TO END HUMANITY?

I DID IT BECAUSE IT'S WHAT WE *DESERVE*.

WHAT WE DID TO THE PLANET ON OUR BEST DAYS...

WE WERE DESTROYING IT. LIKE WE DESTROY EACH OTHER. LIKE WE DESTROY EVERYTHING.

AND YOU KNOW I'M RIGHT.

WE'VE GIVEN UP OUR RIGHT TO SURVIVE. WE DON'T DESERVE TO.

WE JUST DON'T.

GOODBYE, CHILD.

WUUUMF

GOOD-BYE.

C'MON, AJAX...LET'S GO HOME.

THE END.

MAESTRO: WORLD WAR M #1

THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW.

EMIL. YOU ARE NEEDED.

THE DOCTOR IS BEING...

...UNCOOPERATIVE.

INDEED.

WELL THEN, NADIA...

LET US SEE IF WE CAN CONVINCE HIM OF THE FOOLISHNESS OF HIS...

...RECALCITRANCE.

DOCTOR BANNER! I UNDERSTAND YOU ARE REFUSING TO COOPERATE, YES?

THE BOMB YOU WANT ME TO CONSTRUCT...

...IT WOULD END ALL LIFE ON EARTH.

I WON'T DO IT.

YES. YOU WILL.

AND DO NOT EVEN THINK ABOUT TRYING TO TRANSFORM INTO YOUR ALTER EGO.

I WILL SIMPLY BEAT HIM AS THOROUGHLY AS I DID THE PREVIOUS TIMES.

OH. THAT'S RIGHT. YOU CANNOT CHANGE ANYMORE.

OUR SCIENTISTS HAVE ATTENDED TO THAT.

WHAT IS THAT SHAKING...?

EMIL!

BANNER! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

IT'S... IT'S NOT ME...

WELL, WELL!

WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

world war M

Part One: The Last Dance

NICE LITTLE SETUP YOU HAVE HERE, EMIL.

D-DON'T HURT ME!

NO WORRIES, BRUCE. I HAVE *LARGER* TARGETS.

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, BUT--

WHAT, YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE AN OLD FRIEND?

EMIL!
NADIA!
SO, WHAT IS HE TO YOU?
MY...MY HUSBAND!
YOU DON'T SAY.
I USED TO BE MARRIED. AND GUESS WHAT?
YOUR HUSBAND KILLED HER. OR TRIED TO.
WHAT DO YOU SAY I RETURN THE FAVOR?
SNAP!
NOOO!

THERE. WE'RE EVEN.

TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION...

...HE GOES BY THE NAME "MAESTRO."

YOU ONCE KNEW HIM AS THE HULK. BUT HE HASN'T GONE BY THAT NAME IN A WHILE.

YOU...YOU'RE *M.O.D.O.K.*...

YES. I ONCE KILLED YOU A LONG TIME AGO.

AS WITH MOST SUCH ENDEAVORS IN OUR WORLD, IT DIDN'T QUITE TAKE.

I NEED YOU TO BE QUIET NOW. I HAVE A GOOD DEAL TO TELL YOU, AND ONLY SECONDS WITHIN WHICH TO DO IT.

THIS ENTIRE ENGAGEMENT THUS FAR HAS ONLY TAKEN ONE SECOND, BUT WHEN MISSILES ARE CLOSING IN ON YOU, TIME HAS A TENDENCY TO TICK DOWN RATHER QUICKLY.

M-MISSILES? I...I DON'T UNDER--

--STAND, YES, I AM WELL AWARE OF THAT. LISTEN CAREFULLY TO ME AND I WILL EXPLAIN AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS I CAN.

THIS WORLD IN WHICH YOU ARE LIVING: IT ISN'T REAL.

IT'S A COMPUTER CONSTRUCTION. A SIMULATION.

THE REAL WORLD HAS FALLEN INTO POST-APOCALYPTIC WASTE AND YOU ARE BEING PRESERVED WITHIN AN A.I.M. STRONGHOLD.

I...I DON'T BELIEVE--

WHAT IN THE--?

MISSILES ARE, AT THIS MOMENT, COMING RIGHT AT US. I ASSUME THE MAESTRO IS RESPONSIBLE. THEY WILL DESTROY THIS BASE AND ME AND EVERYONE WITHIN.

WHAT... WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?

VENGEANCE.

UNHHH...

UNFFFF...

HULK

FIGURES.

HE SHOULD HAVE LET ME DIE.

THAT DAMNED M.O.D.O.K. SHOULD HAVE JUST LET ME DIE IN MY OBLIVION.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YEAR IT IS, OR EVEN IF YEARS MATTER ANYMORE.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HUMANITY DID TO WIPE ITSELF OUT. IF ONE OF MY "COLLEAGUES" WAS BEHIND IT.

ALL I KNOW IS THAT I HAVE BEEN WALKING FOR HOURS WITH NO CLEAR IDEA OF WHERE I'M GOING.

WHAT A METAPHOR FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.

MY LIFE.

UNTIL HOURS AGO, I THOUGHT I WAS A HIGH-RANKING KGB OFFICIAL. AND NOW I AM AWAKE TO DISCOVER THAT I AM...NOTHING.

FIVE THOUSAND MILES FROM HERE TO RUSSIA. AND EVEN IF I COULD TRAVERSE THAT DISTANCE, WHAT WOULD I FIND? PROBABLY MORE LIKE THIS.

MORE NOTHING.

LIKE ME.

EH?

WHAT IN THE HELL...?

THERE HE IS!

YOU WILL COME WITH US!

WHY SHOULD I DO THAT?

WHO ARE YOU?

IT IS NOT YOUR PLACE TO ASK QUESTIONS!

IT IS YOUR PLACE TO OBEY!

UNHHH--!

SHRRRLL

GENTLEMEN... I AM NOT HAVING... THE BEST DAY...

AND YOU'RE HARDLY...

...IMPROVING IT!

THOOM

AFTER HIM!

PACIFIC PARK

THOSE GUYS ARE REALLY STARTING TO PISS ME OFF.

PACIFIC PARK

HERE! CONSIDER THIS A SOUVENIR!

KER-PAAAA

MOVE! MOVE!

WHERE IS HE?

FAN OUT! FIND HIM!

DON'T LOOK TOO HARD.

SPLASH

NOW...

...LET'S START OVER.

THE REST OF YOU WANT ME TO FRY YOUR BOSS HERE? BY ALL MEANS, KEEP ON COMING.

OTHERWISE, STAY RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE.

AND YOU: BIG SHOT. WHY DO YOU WANT ME TO GO WITH YOU?

WE WERE ORDERED TO CAPTURE YOU! WE'VE BEEN MONITORING THIS AREA IN THE EVENT YOU SHOULD APPEAR AND THAT IS ALL WE KNOW!

WHO ORDERED YOU?

I DID.

BUT *NOT* TO CAPTURE *YOU.*

THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO CAPTURE THE *HULK*.

YOU ARE NOT THE HULK.

I HAVE NO IDEA WHO YOU ARE.

THIS IS ALL A MISUNDERSTANDING.

YOU'RE NAMOR, THE SUB-MARINER.

YOU LOOK... GOOD, I SUPPOSE. I HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH TIME HAS PASSED SINCE WHAT I'D CALL MY OWN TIME.

DECADES.

COULDN'T TELL FROM LOOKING AT YOU.

I REMIND YOU, I WAS 85 WHEN THE CENTURY TURNED. I DO NOT AGE AS YOU DO.

AND YOU ARE...?

EMIL BLONSKY. THOUGH SOME CALL ME THE ABOMINATION.

NOT OUT OF FLATTERY, I ASSUME.

CAN YOU BREATHE UNDERWATER, EMIL?

NO.

TAKE THIS. IT WILL ENABLE YOU TO DO SO.

THEN YOU CAN ACCOMPANY ME TO MY HOME.

WHY SHOULD I?

ARE YOU DOING ANYTHING *ELSE?*

NO.

BY THE WAY, I UNDERSTAND HE'S NOT CALLED THE HULK ANYMORE.

YES, THAT'S CORRECT. HE GOES BY--

MAESTRO.

MINISTER.

DYSTOPIA.

CAN I SAFELY ASSUME THAT DOCTOR DOOM IS...DISPOSED OF?

HE GOT AWAY.

AH. I SEE. HOW UNFORTUNATE. ANY IDEA WHERE...?

LATVERIA, I ASSUME.

ARE YOU GOING TO PURSUE HIM?

ACROSS THE *OCEAN?* UNLIKELY.

LET HIM ROT THERE, FOR ALL I CARE.

AS LONG AS HE STAYS OUT OF MY WAY...

"...TO HELL WITH HIM."

YOU ARE GOING TO BE FINE, SIR. I GUARANTEE IT.

"FINE," WINSTON? ARE YOU *DELUSIONAL?*

I CANNOT WALK. CANNOT ATTEND TO MY NEEDS.

THE MAESTRO DESTROYED ME. I BARELY GOT AWAY ALIVE.

AM I RIGHT TO ASSUME YOU WILL NOT ALLOW HIM TO GET AWAY WITH IT?

YOU ASSUME CORRECTLY.

BUT I WILL NEED *AID*, THAT MUCH IS CLEAR.

THERE IS ONE WHO KNOWS HIM BETTER THAN ANYONE.

AND WHO WOULD THAT ONE BE?

RICHARD JONES.

RICHARD JONES. WE NEED TO SPEAK.

DOCK ARM

JONES?

GREEN GOBLIN'S WEAPONS

KRAVEN THE

MYSTERIO

MARLO?

MAR--?

NO! IT IS VICTOR VON DOOM!

HEY, STEVE. IT'S BEEN AGES.

OH, FOR--

GRAMPS? WHO YOU TALKING TO?

CAPTAIN MARVEL.

OH. THAT'S NICE.

X-MEN

X-MEN SUM

GRAMPS. THE MAESTRO'S BACK.

LOOKS LIKE HE GOT RID OF DOOM, SO THAT'S A PLUS. BUT NOW WE'RE STUCK WITH HIM AGAIN.

THAT'S NICE.

HE'S GETTING WORSE, ISN'T HE.

HE'S FINE.

YOU WANT TO LIE TO YOURSELF, JANIS, GO AHEAD, BUT DON'T LIE TO *ME.*

HE HAS GOOD DAYS AND BAD DAYS.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME HE HAD A GOOD DAY, HUH?

SIX MONTHS AGO? A YEAR?

STOP WORRYING ABOUT GRAMPS. WE SHOULD WORRY ABOUT THE MAESTRO.

HE'S THE PROBLEM, DAKORD. HE'S THE ONE WE NEED TO SHUT DOWN.

HOW?!

WHAT'S THE PLAN, HUH? WHAT SCHEME HAVE YOU WORKED UP?

WE'LL FIND A WAY.

WELL, THAT ANSWERED THAT, DIDN'T IT.

HOW, EXACTLY?

SOMEHOW!

CLK

HE'S ON HIS WAY.

YOU'RE CERTAIN THIS TIME? MY SQUADS HAVE BEEN PATROLLING FOR--

YES, I AM CERTAIN. HE SAID HE WANTS TO INSPECT THE SITE OF A.I.M.'S DESTRUCTION. WANTS TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE TRULY DISPOSED OF.

AND IS HE FLYING OUT HERE?

IN A SENSE. HE'S LEAPING.

YOU HAVE TIME. EVEN AT HIS SPEED IT WILL TAKE HIM SOME HOURS. PROBABLY WON'T ARRIVE BEFORE MORNING.

WE'LL BE READY.

GOOD WORK, TORO.

THANK YOU, NAMOR.

SO, EMIL...HAS MY FAMILY BROUGHT YOU UP TO DATE?

THEY HAVE. THANK YOU, *NAMMU*, AND...I'M SORRY, YOUR NAME AGAIN IS...?

LEONARD.

LEONARD. NOT THE MOST ATLANTEAN NAME.

IT WAS MY FATHER'S NAME.

SO... HUMANITY MANAGED TO WIPE ITSELF OUT, DID IT?

IT WAS A LONG TIME COMING.

FORTUNATELY, ENOUGH OF MY CITIES PROVED TO BE IMMUNE TO THEIR RADIOACTIVE FALLOUT.

CITIES?

YES, I HAVE SEVERAL. THIS ONE IS ACTUALLY CALLED *PACIFICA.*

THE MAESTRO'S ACTIVITIES CONCERN ME.

HUMANITY IS WIPED OUT AND I'D PREFER TO KEEP IT THAT WAY.

SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

HE WANTS TO RETURN HUMANITY'S DOMINATION...

...WITH HIMSELF IN CHARGE.

AND I'M GOING TO STOP HIM.

WITH WHAT?

TO BEGIN WITH? *THIS.*

IS THAT...?

YES. AN *OLD FRIEND.*

KOOM

WELL, THAT SEEMS PRETTY FINAL.

NO LIFE SIGN READINGS.

NOT EVEN PEOPLE A.I.M. HAD ON ICE.

LOOKS LIKE THE JOB IS--

FWOOSH

WHAT THE HELL--?!

YOU?!

I DON'T *BELIEVE* IT!

HOW THE HELL ARE YOU STILL ALIVE, JOHNNY?!

THE NAME'S NOT "JOHNNY." IT'S *JIM.*

BUT YOU *CAN* CALL ME...

THE HUMAN TORCH!

ARGHHH! THAT... *HURTS!*

WHY THE HELL DOES THAT HURT?!

RRRAH!

HUNH. YOU REALLY *AREN'T* JOHNNY STORM.

DOESN'T MATTER. IN A SECOND, THERE WON'T BE ANYTHING LEFT OF YOU.

DAMMIT!

LET'S SEE HOW YOU SURVIVE...

...NOVA FLAME!

BRING IT ON.

FINAL 2004

KOF

HUNH.

HE'S HEADED TO THE OCEAN.

OKAY, THEN: *ROUND TWO.*

MAESTRO: WORLD WAR M #2

THE DEPTHS OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

PART OF ME HOPES THAT HE DOESN'T NOTICE ME AND LEADS ME TO WHEREVER HE CAME FROM.

BUT ANOTHER HOPES THAT HE SPOTS ME AND WE WIND UP SLUGGING IT OUT HERE UNDER THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

HE MAY BE ABLE TO IGNITE HIS FISTS, BUT IF WE'RE UNDERWATER, I'M LIKING MY ODDS.

BUT WHO *IS* HE? HE'S *NOT* JOHNNY STORM, THAT'S FOR SURE.

I REMEMBER THERE WAS A ***HUMAN TORCH*** BACK DURING WORLD WAR II, ALTHOUGH HE WASN'T ACTUALLY HUMAN. HE WAS AN ***ANDROID*** CREATED BY ***DR. PHINEAS HORTON.***

IS THAT WHO THIS IS? HE SAID HIS NAME IS JIM. WAS THE ORIGINAL TORCH'S NAME--

HOLY...

A *CITY.* A WHOLE CITY UNDER THE SEA.

BUT IT'S NOT ATLANTIS. WRONG OCEAN, FOR A START.

STILL, IF IT'S A CITY UNDER THE SEA, THAT MEANS ONLY ONE THING:

THE *SUB-MARINER* IS INVOLVED.

SO? HOW DID IT GO?

WHERE IS EMIL?

THE *ABOMINATION*, YOU MEAN? HE IS RESTING.

HE'S HAD A RATHER TRYING TIME.

THERE. MY WIFE AND SON HAVE ANSWERED *YOUR* QUESTION. NOW ANSWER *MINE.*

I INCINERATED WHATEVER REMAINED OF LOS ANGELES. AND THE *MAESTRO.*

YOU ARE SAYING THE MAESTRO IS DEAD?

I'M SAYING THAT NO ONE CAN SURVIVE *NOVA HEAT.* NOTHING LIVING.

IT'S LIKE DROPPING SOMEONE INTO THE SUN.

WELL DONE, JAMES.

IT IS NICE TO HAVE HIM ATTENDED TO--

THOOOOM!!

WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS *THAT?!*

I SUSPECT THAT THIS BUSINESS HASN'T BEEN CONCLUDED AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS YOU HOPED. I FURTHER SUSPECT WE'RE UNDER--

ATTACK!

BY ALL MEANS...

...BRING IT!

world war M

Part Two: *Curtains*

NAMOR! YOU GONNA HIDE BEHIND YOUR GUARDS? OR DO YOU HAVE THE NERVE TO COME OUT AND FACE ME?!

I HAVE MORE THAN SUFFICIENT NERVE.

SO...YOU CAN BREATHE UNDERWATER NOW, HULK.

THE NAME'S "MAESTRO."

WHATEVER. STAND DOWN, I'M WARNING YOU...

YOU'RE...

...WARNING ME?

BWWAAAAHAAAA

STOP LAUGHING, OR I'LL UNLEASH MY GUARD UPON YOU.

WHAT, YOU MEAN THE GUARDS I JUST SCATTERED ALL OVER THE STREET? THOSE GUARDS?

NO. NOT THOSE GUARDS.

EH?

THAT GUARD.

MY SECOND BIGGEST. PRAY YOU NEVER MEET MY LARGEST ONE.

HULK...WE SHOULD NOT BE FIGHTING. WE WERE ALLIES ONCE.

"ALLIES"? YOU AND YOUR FELLOW *ILLUMINATI* FIRED ME INTO SPACE!

MY FATHER DISAGREED WITH THAT DECISION! HE LEFT THE ILLUMINATI BECAUSE OF IT!

YOU HAVE A SON. AND THAT'S YOUR WIFE, I ASSUME.

I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO KILLING BOTH OF THEM.

HULK... *BANNER*...LISTEN TO ME...

YOU SENT THE TORCH TO DESTROY ME.

YES, I DID. BANNER, WE HAVE NO LOVE FOR HUMANITY, YOU KNOW THIS. HUMANITY ANNIHILATED THE WORLD, AND I WATCHED IT BURN.

AND NOW YOU PLAN TO BRING HUMANITY BACK TO STRENGTH. GIVE IT DOMINION OVER THE EARTH'S SURFACE.

IF YOU DO THAT, YOU DOOM THE WORLD. YOU MUST KNOW THIS.

I'LL KEEP THEM UNDER CONTROL.

YOU CAN'T. NO *ONE* CAN. SOONER OR LATER, THEIR COMPULSION FOR SELF-IMMOLATION WILL UNDO THEM.

THEY WILL FIND A WAY TO DESTROY YOU AND THEN THEMSELVES.

BANNER... LEAVE THEM BEHIND. *FORGET* THE SURFACE WORLD.

LIVE DOWN HERE IN PEACE WITH US.

ATTACKING YOU WAS A MISTAKE, I ADMIT THAT. JOIN *PACIFICA*.

LET US BE ALLIES ONCE MORE.

WHAT DO YOU SAY, BANNER?

SAME THING I SAID BEFORE...

...THE NAME'S MAESTRO!

YOU THINK I'M AFRAID OF YOUR DAVY JONES REJECT?

LET ME GIVE YOU SOMETHING NEW TO THINK ABOUT!

FATHER! GET MOTHER TO SAFETY!

I'LL HANDLE THIS!

LEONARD, *WAIT!* YOU'RE NOT READY FOR--

WHAPAM

HRR...

STAY *STILL!*

KRAAK

KID, YOU ARE-- HUH?

LEONARD, GET TO SAFETY!

BUT--

THAT WAS NOT A REQUEST!

HAH!

UNNHHH!

WAAAAM

CONCENTRATE FIRE! DON'T EASE UP!

BY...BY ALL MEANS...KEEP IT COMING...

IT'LL MAKE IT...ALL THE MORE SATISFYING...

...WHEN I DO...

...THIS!

IN A FIGHT, THERE'S ALWAYS COLLATERAL DAMAGE. I NEVER CARED ABOUT IT MUCH.

WHO KNOWS HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES DURING MY RAMPAGES?

HELPESS BYSTANDERS. LUCKLESS MOTORISTS. PEOPLE WORKING IN BUILDINGS.

AHHHH!

IN THE OLD DAYS, IT DIDN'T BOTHER ME.

MOTHER!

THESE ARE NEW DAYS. SO MUCH HAS CHANGED.

BUT MY LACK OF CARING IS STILL THE SAME.

NO, NO, NO...!

NO! NUUMA! LEONARD!

NOOOO!

NO...

DON'T YOU DARE.

EMIL!

GOT OUT OF A.I.M. BEFORE I BLEW IT UP, HUH? I'M ACTUALLY PLEASED ABOUT THAT.

STILL HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN YOU TRIED TO KILL BETTY. ITCHING TO PAY YOU BACK.

WHAM

KILL YOU!

I'LL KILL YOU, YOU BASTARD!

THE HELL?!

WHERE DID HE--?

THEY...

THEY JUST TRANSPORTED OUT OF HERE, LIKE...

DOOM.

DOOM SNATCHED THEM AWAY.

OOOOOF!

NOW WHAT?!

HELP ME...

HELP ME...GAIN REVENGE...

...ON THE MAESTRO...

YOU MUST...

OH, #%$@--

OKAY...

WHO THE HELL IS THIS?

MAESTRO: WORLD WAR M #3

THE OUTSKIRTS OF DYSTOPIA.

COMFORTABLE BACK THERE, MINISTER?

FINE. IT'S RATHER HOT OUT HERE, THOUGH.

WELCOME TO *THE WASTELANDS.* WHY ARE THERE FARMERS OUT HERE AGAIN?

THEY ARE ENDEAVORING TO RESTORE THE LAND.

AND YOU'RE VISITING THEM... WHY?

THE MAESTRO CHECKS IN WITH THEM ON A MONTHLY BASIS. HE'S NOT HERE, SO--

MY GOD!

SHIT

GROWWWFF

SPLAT

HI THERE.

I'M JANIS. THIS IS DAKORD.

MY GRAMPS WANTS T'SCAN WITH YOU.

AND...WHO WOULD YOUR "GRAMPS" BE?

"RICK JONES."

THE MAESTRO HAS SPOKEN OF YOU.

I'LL BET.

THIS IS QUITE THE FACILITY YOU HAVE HERE.

I WAS BLINDFOLDED WHEN YOUR ASSOCIATES BROUGHT ME.

UH...

WHY ARE YOU STARING AT ME?

TORO?

GEEZ, YOU GOT OLD. CAN YOU STILL FLAME?

MY GOD.

UH...NO. NOT FOR AGES NOW. BUT HOW DID--?

BROOKLYN ACCENT. PRETTY DISTINCTIVE.

WHO, UH...WHO'S "TORO"?

OLD SIDEKICK OF THE ORIGINAL HUMAN TORCH.

OKAY. WHO'S THE HUMAN TORCH?

OLD ANDROID HERO.

A HUMAN ANDROID HERO. ALL RIGHT.

SO WHY DO YOU WORK FOR THE MAESTRO?

I DON'T. I WORKED FOR HIS PREDECESSOR. HE JUST TOOK OVER.

I'VE JUST BEEN GOING ALONG WITH IT, HOPING THAT SOMETHING WOULD COME ALONG TO DESTROY HIM.

LIKE WHAT?

YEAH, WE'RE NOT FLARKING AROUND. WE WANT TO KNOW.

WHAT'S HIS WEAKNESS? HOW DO WE DESTROY HIM?

HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY THAT I KNOW OF.

HIS STRENGTH IS LIMITLESS, AND ANYWHERE THAT IT FALLS SHORT...

...HE'S ABLE TO OUTTHINK HIS OPPONENT.

"I THOUGHT DOCTOR DOOM HAD A GOOD CHANCE...

"...BUT IT TURNS OUT I WAS WRONG."

LATVERIA.

HOW LONG HAS NAMOR BEEN DRINKING?

SINCE DOOM TRANSPORTED US HERE.

HE FOUND THE WINE CELLAR AND THEN JUST PARKED HIMSELF IN FRONT OF THAT PORTRAIT OF DOOM'S MOTHER.

IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE. HE SAW HIS WIFE AND SON BOTH DIE HORRIBLY.

I'VE BEEN THROUGH WORSE. HELL, I'VE *DONE* WORSE.

DONE WORSE? WAIT...ARE YOU A SUPER *VILLAIN*, EMIL?

TITLES, HAMMOND. WE'RE ALL DEFINED BY TITLES.

A MAN WHO IS A TERRORIST TO SOME IS A VALIANT WARRIOR TO OTHERS.

HERO, VILLAIN...IT'S *MEANINGLESS*.

IT'S NOT MEANINGLESS. HEROES FIGHT FOR THE GREATER GOOD.

EVERYBODY FIGHTS FOR GOOD IN THEIR OWN EYES.

YOUR REVERED AMERICAN FOUNDING FATHERS WERE TRAITORS IN THE EYES OF THE BRITISH. SOMEONE ALWAYS BLAMES SOMEONE ELSE FOR THEIR DEEDS.

IN MY CASE, IT WAS REED RICHARDS.

HE DESTROYED MY FACE. SET ME ON MY PATH TO SO-CALLED VILLAINY.

ALL THAT I HAVE DONE LIES AT HIS FEET. YET HE WAS HAILED AS A CHAMPION AND I AS EVIL.

SO YOU TAKE NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR DEEDS, DOOM?

MY "DEEDS" WERE REASONABLE REACTIONS TO THE WORLD AROUND ME. RICHARDS DESERVED TO DIE...

AND NOW HE'S DEAD. SO WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO LIVE FOR?

VENGEANCE.

VENGEANCE ON...

"...THE MAESTRO."

World War M

Part Three: End of the Road

IT WAS DOOM. HAD TO BE.

THAT WAS THE SAME MATTER TRANSPORT BEAM HE USED TO ESCAPE FROM ME BACK IN ALCHEMAX.

SO NOW WHAT? NAMOR AND COMPANY ARE GONE.

DOOM HAS ESCAPED.

THEY'RE GOING TO COME AFTER ME SOONER OR LATER.

I COULD GO AFTER THEM, BUT HOW? I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE DOOM IS.

FINE. WHEREVER THEY ARE, LET THEM COWER THERE. IF THEY DARE TO SHOW UP...

...I'LL DISPOSE OF THEM. THE WAY I DID WITH HERCULES, A.I.M. AND THE PANTHEON.

NO ONE CAN STAND UP TO THE MAESTRO.

NO ONE.

MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING BACK AT ALCHEMAX THAT CAN HELP ME TRACK THEM DOWN.

IF THERE IS, THEY'LL NEVER SEE ME COMING.

DRON 2.4

HE LOOKS NONE THE WORSE FOR WEAR.

HE NEVER DOES.

CAN'T YOU JUST BLOW HIM OUT OF EXISTENCE WITH AN ORBITING LASER OR SOMETHING?

AN ORBITING LASER. SERIOUSLY?

I DON'T *HAVE* AN ORBITING LASER, AND EVEN IF I DID, IT WOULD JUST BOUNCE OFF HIM. BLONSKY WOULD TELL YOU THAT.

WHERE *IS* BLONSKY ANYWAY?

"APPARENTLY HE DECIDED NAMOR HAD THE RIGHT IDEA."

MAYBE THEY'LL COME BACK. YOUR WIFE AND SON.

...WHAT?

FROM THE DEAD.

I MEAN, M.O.D.O.K. BLASTED ME INTO ATOMS. I CAME BACK FROM THAT.

AND I KILLED THE HULK'S WIFE. *SHE* CAME BACK.

YOU KILLED THE HULK'S WIFE? YOU *ARE* EVIL.

SO I'VE BEEN TOLD.

I USED TO BE EVIL. THREATENED TO SINK MANHATTAN UNDER A TIDAL WAVE.

FOUGHT THE FANTASTIC FOUR. THE AVENGERS. THEY SAW ME AS A VILLAIN.

AND WERE YOU, DO YOU THINK?

I WAS FIGHTING ON BEHALF OF MY PEOPLE AGAINST A RACE THAT CARED NOT ABOUT THE OCEANS.

TO VILLAINY.

KLINK

THOOOM

MAESTRO.

HAIL THE MAESTRO.

SHUT UP.

MINISTER! ARE YOU HERE?

WHERE ELSE WOULD I BE?

I WANT FOOD, A BATH AND A WOMAN. AFTER THAT, I'LL BE AT ALCHEMAX.

WHAT'S AT ALCHEMAX, MAESTRO?

I WANT TO SEE IF THERE'S SOMETHING THERE THAT WILL ENABLE ME TO FIND DOOM.

SOMETHING LIKE WHAT?

YOU HAVE A LOT OF QUESTIONS TODAY.

I AM SIMPLY CONCERNED ABOUT DOOM. HE PRESENTS A *THREAT.*

I WORRY ABOUT MY SURVIVAL AS MUCH AS ANYONE ELSE'S.

IS THAT *UNUSUAL?*

NO. OF COURSE NOT.

IT'S JUST THAT I HAVE A LOT OF ENEMIES. SOMETIMES IT'S HARD TO KNOW WHO YOUR FRIENDS ARE.

I CAN SYMPATHIZE.

MY LIFE HAS BEEN A WASTE...

EVER SINCE I FIRST CONFRONTED BANNER AND BECAME THIS...THIS...

...THIS WHATEVER-I-AM.

OVER AND OVER AGAIN, I FOUGHT THE HULK, AND WHAT DID IT GET ME?

NOTHING.

YEARS OF FUTILITY.

I LOST EVERYTHING. MY STATUS AS A KGB AGENT.

MY BELOVED NADIA...

ACTUALLY, I NEVER LOVED YOU.

YOU WERE JUST A STEP-UP IN SOCIETY. I FAKED MY INTEREST IN YOU.

NADIA, WAIT! WAIT!

OUCH, BABE.

THAT MUST HURT.

EMIL.

EMIL, WAKE UP!

ZZZT --HUH?

WHERE'S NAMOR?

WHO?

NAMOR! THE SUB-MARINER!

OH, RIGHT. HIM.

HE SAID HE HAD TO GO SOMEWHERE.

WHERE?

HE DIDN'T SAY.

WHAT KIND OF AN ANSWER IS--?

HE DIDN'T SAY!

ALL RIGHT?!

HE DIDN'T SAY AND I DIDN'T ASK. HAPPY?

HELLO...

...MY OLD FRIEND.

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS...

...IT IS TIME TO AWAKEN.

VVVMMMMM

"I WANT VENGEANCE ON THE HULK, EMIL."

"SO DID I, NAMOR. I'VE WANTED IT FOR SO LONG..."

...THAT I HONESTLY HAVE LOST TRACK OF WHY.

I TURNED INTO THIS FORM BECAUSE A JOB FOR THE KGB WENT WRONG. IT WASN'T HIS FAULT...

...BUT I'VE SPENT YEARS ACTING AS IF IT WAS.

I HAVE NO WIFE, NO SON. VENGEANCE IS ALL I HAVE LEFT.

YOU HAVE YOUR KINGDOM.

WITHOUT THEM, I HAVE NOTHING.

NO, *I* HAVE NOTHING. NO WIFE, NO COUNTRY, NO ONE WHO REMEMBERS ME.

ALL I HAVE IS VENGEANCE...

"...AND I'VE NO IDEA WHY IT'S IMPORTANT ANYMORE."

YOU'RE WINSTON, YES? DOOM'S SERVANT?

THAT'S CORRECT. CAN I HELP YOU IN SOME WAY, MR. BLONSKY?

ABSOLUTELY.

NO IDEA WHAT I MIGHT FIND IN THE OLD ALCHEMAX BUILDING HERE THAT COULD BE OF HELP.

BUT THIS IS THE LAST PLACE I SAW DOOM. NO POINT IN STANDING AROUND, THOUGH.

IT'S NOT LIKE HE'S GOING TO REMATERIALIZE HERE.

WAIT, THAT LIGHT--

WAAAM

OH, GOOD. I DIDN'T HAVE TO GO LOOKING FOR YOU.

WAAM

KRAAK!

BWOOM

THIS IS IT, BLONSKY! OUR FINAL BATTLE!

I DON'T HAVE TO HOLD BACK ANYMORE.

I DON'T HAVE TO BEAT YOU TO WITHIN AN INCH OF YOUR LIFE AND THEN STOP SHORT.

NO MERCY. NOT ANYMORE.

THIS ISN'T THE HULK YOU'RE FIGHTING NOW.

I'M THE MAESTRO!

COME ON, BLONSKY! LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT!

ATTA-BOY! STAND UP--

--SO I CAN KNOCK YOU BACK DOWN AGAIN!

KER-THOOOM

WHAT'RE YOU JUST LYING THERE FOR?

WHAT KIND OF TRICK IS THIS?

YOU THINK I'M GOING TO BACK OFF?

SECONDS PASS IN WHICH I POUND ON HIM AND HE MOUNTS NO DEFENSE. NONE.

IT'S A TRICK. IT HAS TO BE.

WHY DON'T YOU FIGHT BACK?!

WHAT'S THE POINT?

OUR WHOLE WORLD IS DEAD. WHAT'S THERE WORTH...FIGHTING FOR...?

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?

WHY'S THE GROUND TREMBLING LIKE--?

RMBLLLLLL

HOLY CRAP...

MAESTRO!!!

YOU DESTROYED WHAT I LOVED!

NOW I WILL RETURN THE FAVOR.

IMPERIUS REX!

MAESTRO: WORLD WAR M #4

MY GOD...I REMEMBER READING ABOUT THIS THING IN THE NEWSPAPERS.

NAMOR USED IT AGAINST THE FANTASTIC FOUR OVER A CENTURY AGO. HOW THE HELL DID *THEY* BEAT IT?

OH. RIGHT. THE THING CLIMBED INSIDE IT WITH AN ATOMIC BOMB, DETONATED IT, AND IT FRIED ITS INSIDES.

DAMMIT. THERE'S NEVER A NUCLEAR WEAPON LYING AROUND WHEN YOU NEED IT.

WORLD WAR HULK

Part Four: *The Last Straw*

VROOM

JANIS, WHAT'S HAPPENING?!

NO CLUE!

OOOOFFF!

KRAK

MU-MUCH OBLIGED.

NO PROBLEM, DAKORD.

GRAMPS! YOU OKAY?! WHAT'S HAPPENING?!?

GODZILLA. WELL, *KINDA*...

GODZILLA?! WHO IN THE WORLD IS...?

VROOM

OH.

EXCELLENT.

MOVE, HERE IT COMES!

AIIIEE!

AAAH!

IT'S GOING TO KILL US ALL!

OH GOD, PLEASE--

YOU'RE DOING WONDERFULLY, FATHER. LOOK AT THEM FLEEING FROM YOU.

IT'S IN YOUR NAME, LEONARD. YOURS AND YOUR MOTHER'S.

NUUMA? ARE YOU NOT PLEASED?

NUUMA?

WHAT DID I EVER DO IN LIFE TO MAKE YOU THINK I WOULD *ENJOY* SEEING SUCH DESTRUCTION?

THOSE PEOPLE RUNNING, SCREAMING...THEY HAVE LOVED ONES, AS YOU DID. WIVES, HUSBANDS, CHILDREN.

DO THEY NOT DESERVE TO GO HOME TO THEM?

THINK, MY LOVE. THINK OF WHAT YOU'RE DOING.

END THIS. *NOW.*

BEFORE IT'S--

UNH!

AAAAAHH!!!

THUUUD

THOOOM

GOOD MOVE, SON.

WE DIDN'T NEED HER.

THAT THING'S GOTTA BE 300 FEET TALL. I'VE NEVER FOUGHT ANYTHING THAT HUGE BEFORE.

WELL, THE BIGGER THEY ARE, THE HARDER, ETC.

NAMOR IS UP THERE GUIDING IT. IF I CAN GET TO HIM, THAT'S--

SO...

...HOW IS THE *FIGHT* GOING?

ALL ACCORDING TO PLAN, MINISTER.

LATVERIA.

MY LORD? I THINK YOU'D BEST AWAKEN.

EH? WHAT IS IT, WINSTON?

A MATTER HAS ARISEN THAT SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO YOUR ATTENTION.

IT COULDN'T WAIT?

I'M AFRAID NOT. IT'S RATHER TIME-SENSITIVE.

TIME-SENSITIVE? THE WORLD IS EFFECTIVELY *OVER*, WINSTON.

WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE TRANSPIRING THAT'S TIME-SENSITIVE?

DYSTOPIA IS UNDER ATTACK.

ATTACK? FROM WHOM?

GODS BELOW.

HAS NAMOR LOST HIS MIND?!

WE WANT TO *CONQUER* THE WORLD! WHO ARE WE GOING TO RULE OVER IF WE *DESTROY* EVERYBODY?!

QUICKLY! BRING ME TO THE TRANSMAT BEAM! WE NEED TO--

KA-BOOM

WHAT WAS *THAT?*

AN EXPLOSION. I SUSPECT *MR. BLONSKY* FOUND THE ARMAMENT ROOM, TOOK AN EXPLOSIVE FROM THERE AND LEFT IT TO DETONATE IN THE TRANSMAT ROOM.

WHY?!

SO WE CAN'T *FOLLOW* HIM.

FOLLOW HIM? WHERE?

HE HAD ME TRANSMAT HIM TO DYSTOPIA.

AND WHY DID YOU DO THAT?

HE ASKED ME TO. YOU TOLD ME TO ACCOMMODATE THE GUESTS WHENEVER POSSIBLE.

WHAT TH--?!

BROOM

DOOM! THAT'S THE SECOND EXPLOSION I'VE HEARD IN THE LAST MINUTE!

ARE WE UNDER ATTACK?!

NO. I SIMPLY DISPOSED OF SOMEONE WHO HAD OUTLIVED THEIR USEFULNESS.

WAS THAT... WINSTON?

"WAS," YES. NOT SO MUCH NOW.

COME WITH ME.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

TO THE TRANSMAT ROOM TO REPAIR IT.

IS IT BROKEN?

IT WAS BLOWN UP.

BY WHO?

WHOM.

BY WHOM?

"BY THE SOON-TO-BE LATE EMIL BLONSKY..."

BOZHE MOY! THAT WOMAN!

SHE LOOKS JUST LIKE MY BELOVED NADIA! I MEAN, IT'S *NOT*, OBVIOUSLY! BUT THE *IMAGE* OF HER!

LIKE A VISION FROM A LIFE I COULD HAVE HAD!

AAAAAHH!

RUN!

UNHHHH...

THOOM

OWWW...

YES, GIGANTO, MY FRIEND, DESTROY IT-- DESTROY IT ALL!

YOU...YOU SAVED US...! THANK Y--!

DON'T THANK ME, JUST GET OUT OF HERE, BEFORE--

NOOO!

NO...

NO.

ARRRRRHHHHHH!

YOU'RE GOING DOWN, NAMOR!

ENJOY THE LAST MOMENTS OF YOUR LIFE, FISH MAN!

YOU MAY BE HOT STUFF IN THE WATER, BUT YOU'RE IN *MY* TERRITORY NOW!

AND YOU DON'T GET TO COME UP HERE AND DESTROY EVERYTHING WITH *IMPUNITY!*

GET READY TO BE IMPERIUS WRECKED!

MMMFFF!

I'M SORRY. DID YOU SAY SOMETHING?

I FEAR THE WORDS OF MY *FAMILY'S MURDERER* DON'T CARRY MUCH WEIGHT WITH ME.

AH. WHAT'S *THIS?*

THE MAESTRO APPEARS TO HAVE SOMETHING ELSE TO SAY.

GO AHEAD, MAESTRO. HURL YOUR SPEAR.

WORST CASE SCENARIO-- YOU HIT YOUR TARGET, IT PENETRATES MY SKIN, WHICH IS UNLIKELY...

...AND I WILL JOIN MY WIFE AND SON ONCE MORE.

SO TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT.

THANKS. I WILL.

AAARRRROOO!

KILL HIM. I'LL KILL HIM. I'LL--

WHAT?

NO!

DOOM!

DAMN YOU, I KNOW THIS IS YOU! CEASE THIS INTERFERENCE IMME--

WHAT IN THE--?!

WELL, THAT'S JUST *GREAT.*

--DIATELY...

THUNDERATION!

I DID NOT ASK FOR YOUR INTERFERENCE, DOOM!

AND I DID NOT ASK FOR YOU TO WAGE WAR ON DYSTOPIA! THOSE PEOPLE DID NOTHING TO YOU.

SINCE WHEN DO YOU CARE ABOUT PEOPLE?

SINCE THERE ARE SO FEW OF THEM LEFT, OBVIOUSLY.

SEND ME BACK! *NOW!*

YOU DO NOT ISSUE ORDERS TO ME.

ZZZAFT

ELECTRICITY? *TRULY?* YOU THINK TO JOLT SOMEONE WHO CAN ABSORB THE BLASTS OF A *THOUSAND* ELECTRIC EELS?

IDIOT.

AS I THOUGHT--

--HIS SKIN MAY BE IMPENETRABLE, BUT HIS EYE? NOT SO MUCH.

NOW WHERE'S HE GOING? NAMOR APPEARS TO HAVE VANISHED. IS HE...?

YES! HE'S HEADING BACK OUT TO SEA!

NAMOR WAS TELLING HIM WHAT TO DO. BETWEEN THE SUB-MARINER DISAPPEARING AND THE WOUND HE'S TAKEN, MOBY DICK WANTS *OUT*.

WELL, THAT'S PERFECT. ONE LESS THING TO--

SON OF A GUN.

KOFF KOFF

WHY...WHY DID YOU DO THAT?

I WANTED TO DROWN.

YEAH, NO. YOU DON'T GET OFF THAT EASY.

WHERE DID NAMOR GO?

DOOM'S TRANSMAT BEAM. HE'S PROBABLY BACK IN LATVERIA.

YOU WANT TO BREAK MY ARM? GO AHEAD.

IDIOT.

LOOK...NAMOR DID A LOT OF DAMAGE. KILLED A LOT OF PEOPLE.

HE SHOULD BE MADE TO PAY FOR THAT. DOOM TOO.

YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING *USEFUL?* FIND A WAY FOR ME TO GET VENGEANCE.

YOU MEAN LIKE PRODUCE A COMM DEVICE THAT I COULD USE TO TRANSPORT MYSELF BACK TO LATVERIA AND LET YOU HITCH A RIDE?

YES, SOMETHING *EXACTLY* LIKE--

--THAT.

AND YOU'RE GOING TO HELP ME? IT CAN'T BE THAT EASY.

SOMETIMES, THINGS REALLY ARE.

OKAY, THEN.

LET'S GET STARTED.

MAESTRO: WORLD WAR M #5

world war M

Part Five:

Fade to Black

HOW LONG IS THIS GOING TO TAKE?

NO CLUE. WINSTON SAID THAT WHEN I ACTIVATED IT, HE WOULD TRANSMAT ME BACK TO *LATVERIA*.

THEN WHY ARE WE STILL HERE?

I DON'T KNOW.

IF THIS IS A *TRICK*...

IF IT IS, IT'S A PRETTY STUPID ONE. WHAT WOULD I GET OUT OF IT?

YOUR BUTT KICKED.

THUS PROVING MY POINT.

HAVE PATIENCE. WINSTON MAY BE OCCUPIED WITH SOMETHING.

HE'LL BRING US THERE AS SOON AS HE CAN.

HERE. *THIS* IS WHAT'S MAKING THAT ANNOYING BEEPING NOISE.

I'M SURPRISED YOU HEARD IT, NAMOR.

YOU'D BE *AMAZED* WHAT I CAN HEAR WITH THESE EARS, TORCH.

DOOM, WHY DID YOU DESTROY WINSTON?

BECAUSE HE TRANSPORTED BLONSKY *WITHOUT* PERMISSION.

AND THIS DEVICE?

I WOULD IMAGINE THAT BLONSKY WISHES TO BE ***RETURNED*** HERE.

FINE. DO IT.

WE DON'T KNOW FOR SURE IT'S BLONSKY. PERHAPS ***BANNER*** DISCOVERED THE DEVICE.

OR PERHAPS BLONSKY AND BANNER HAVE TEAMED UP.

TEAMED UP? IS THAT LIKELY?

NO. BUT I HAVEN'T ATTAINED MY STATUS BY COUNTING ON WHAT'S LIKELY.

SO WHAT DO WE DO?

PLAN.

HMM. THIS MIGHT BE A WASTE OF TIME.

SO I SHOULD JUST GO AHEAD AND KILL YOU?

IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE A THREAT?

EVERYTHING I KNEW AND LOVED IS *DEAD*. WHAT IN THE WORLD DO I HAVE TO LIVE FOR?

HELL, WHAT KEEPS *YOU* GOING? I REALLY WANT TO KNOW.

SERIOUSLY?

YES.

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE WANTED ME DEAD OVER THE YEARS?

SO?

SO IF I DIE... THEN *THEY* WIN. AND I WON'T LET THOSE BASTARDS WIN.

EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE LONG DEAD.

YEAH.

THAT'S MESSED UP.

YOU ASKED.

YES, BUT--

IT'S HAPPENING! GRAB ON!

WELL...

IT APPEARS MR. BLONSKY BROUGHT A FRIEND ALONG.

IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, DOCTOR BANNER.

I OWE YOU FOR THE DAMAGE YOU DID TO MY LEGS...

AND DOCTOR DOOM ALWAYS *REPAYS* HIS *DEBTS.*

BY ALL MEANS, ATTEMPT TO BREAK OUT. BUT BOTH THE BARS AND THE FLOOR ARE MADE OF *ADAMANTIUM*, A METAL THAT DEFIES EVEN *YOUR* STRENGTH.

SO YOU'RE GOING TO WHAT? JUST LEAVE US HERE FOREVER?

OH, NO. NOTHING SO *MUNDANE.*

NO, I'M GOING TO *GAS YOU TO DEATH.*

I KNOW YOU CAN HOLD YOUR BREATH FOR QUITE LONG, BUT NOT, I SURMISE, FOREVER.

THIS HAS BEEN A STIMULATING ENGAGEMENT, DOCTOR BANNER...

...BUT I'M AFRAID IT IS NOW *ENDED.* FAREWELL.

I DISLIKE THIS.

POISONING AN ENEMY FROM A SAFE DISTANCE? IT SEEMS... *COWARDLY.*

BUT EFFECTIVE. WE WIN.

AND *WINNING* IS ALL THAT MATTERS.

SO... THIS IS IT.

SHUT UP.

OF ALL THE WAYS I ENVISIONED I'D DIE, I NEVER--

I SAID SHUT UP!

THAT'S IT. THAAAAAT'S IT...

NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE *GRATEFUL*...

...FOR BANNER...

...BEING SO *PUNY*...

COME ON...COME ON...

AAAAGHHH!

DAMNATION!

YOU PUSHED ME!

THAT HURT, YOU MORON!

I THOUGHT YOU NEEDED HELP.

QUIET. SAVE YOUR BREATH... LITERALLY.

HE SAID THE FLOOR WAS ADAMANTIUM. FINE.

BUT IT'S GOT TO BE BOLTED TO THE FLOOR OF THE ROOM, AND *THAT* ISN'T ADAMANTIUM.

SOMETHING CRASHED UP AHEAD!

I THINK WE CAN TAKE A GUESS WHAT *THAT* WAS.

PERFECT. JUST PERFECT.

THEY COULD BE ANYWHERE.

THEY'RE *LARGE* AND *GREEN.* AND THEY WON'T BE HIDING. WE'LL FIND THEM.

OKAY. LET'S GO.

NOW, YOU'RE *SURE* ABOUT THIS PLAN? YOU CAN HANDLE THE COMPUTERS...?

I'M A *SPY*. I CAN HACK INTO ANYTHING. IT'S WHAT I DO.

YOU KNOW, IF YOU HADN'T TRIED TO KILL MY WIFE, I COULD REALLY GET TO LIKE YOU.

THAT MEANS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO ME.

I KNOW. WHERE'RE DOOM'S COMPUTERS LOCATED?

ONE FLOOR DOWN.

KRAKOOM

HA! FOUND YOU!

DOWN, YOU SAID?

YES.

THOOM

GO!

I'VE GOT THE FISH MAN!

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

ANYWHERE I WANT, BOTS.

YOU WANT TO GO?

LET'S GO!

I WAS A MAN OF HONOR.

A PATRIOT.

I FOUGHT FOR MY COUNTRY. I GAVE THEM EVERYTHING THEY ASKED FOR.

I GAVE THEM MORE.

I WANTED TO DO GREAT THINGS.

I WANTED TO BE HAILED AS A *HERO*.

WAS THAT SO MUCH TO ASK?

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN *US*, HULK! WE SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT THE WORLD TO ITS *KNEES!*

I TEAMED WITH YOU, AND I TEAMED WITH DOOM. AND YOU BOTH *BETRAYED* ME!

WE COULD HAVE *RULED* TOGETHER!

YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT?

YOU'RE DELUSIONAL! INSANE! YOU'RE--!

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I AM. I AM--

--IMPERIUS REX!

FACE IT, NAMOR. YOU WERE BETRAYED BECAUSE YOU WERE NEVER *TRUSTWORTHY.*

NO ONE BELIEVED IN YOU. NOT YOUR "FRIENDS" OR "ALLIES" OR "LOYAL SUBJECTS."

AT BEST, THEY *FEARED* YOU. AT WORST, THEY WANTED YOU *GONE.*

YOU LIE!

HE SPEAKS THE TRUTH.

WE LIVED IN FEAR OF YOU. OF YOUR TEMPER. OF YOUR STRENGTH. OF YOUR HATRED FOR HUMANITY.

DEEP INSIDE, YOU KNOW IT.

BUT...YOU *LOVED* ME, NUUMA. DIDN'T YOU? YOU MARRIED ME.

YOU WERE THE KING. WHAT CHOICE DID I HAVE?

YOU'RE *LYING* TO ME!

ALL OF YOU!

SHE SPEAKS *TRUTHFULLY*, MY LOVE.

D-DORMA? BUT--

YOU WERE NEVER *HAPPY.* NOT WITH *ME.* NOT WITH *ATLANTIS.*

AND YOU NEVER ACCEPTED THAT I LOVED REED. YOU KIDNAPPED ME...

I *LOVED* YOU, SUSAN!

THE ONLY ONE YOU EVER LOVED WAS *YOURSELF...*

NO! GET BACK! GET AWAY!

I COMMAND YOU! LEAVE ME BE! LEAVE ME--

WAAAAAM

HUNH.

THAT WAS WEIRD.

DOWN THE HALL, BANNER. LAST DOOR. THAT IS MY SANCTUM.

DOOM.

YES. LET US FINISH THIS.

THIS IS A TRAP, ISN'T IT.

WOULD IT MATTER IF IT WERE?

NOT IN THE SLIGHTEST.

KRAK

FWZAAK

GET UP. YOU'RE NOT *DEAD* YET.

THAT WAS THE LOWEST SETTING.

I DERIVE *TRUE JOY* SO RARELY NOWADAYS. BUT I SWEAR TO YOU...

...THIS IS GOING TO MAKE ME *VERY* HAPPY.

WHAT IN THE--?!

FWOOSH!

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!

I...I DON'T KNOW! I DIDN'T TRY TO FLAME ON. I JUST... IGNITED!

BANNER! *YOU'RE* RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS, AREN'T YOU?

BANNER?

BANNER'S NOT HERE. I USED THE TRANSMAT BEAM TO SEND HIM BACK TO DYSTOPIA.

ALL PART OF HIS PLAN.

BLONSKY? WHERE ARE YOU?

I'M IN YOUR COMPUTER CENTER. YOUR ARRAY IS MOST IMPRESSIVE. YOUR *SECURITY*, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS GARBAGE. IT NEVER OCCURRED TO YOU SOMEONE OTHER THAN *YOU* WOULD USE IT, AS I DID.

USE IT...FOR WHAT?

HAVEN'T YOU GUESSED?

I'VE HACKED THE HUMAN TORCH. I'M IN COMMAND OF HIS SYSTEM NOW.

BANNER WAS VERY IMPRESSED WITH HIS...WHAT'S IT CALLED...? OH YES: ***NOVA HEAT.***

OH NO...

THERE *ARE* SAFETY PROTOCOLS SO THE TORCH HIMSELF CAN SURVIVE...BUT I'VE OVERRIDDEN THOSE. THIS WILL BE THE MOST INTENSE HEAT EVER GENERATED.

I DOUBT ANYTHING CAN WITHSTAND IT. NOT EVEN *YOUR ARMOR.*

BUT YOU'LL DIE TOO!

LIFE IS OVERRATED.

NADIA... I'M COMING, BABY.

WHAT'S ALL THE SCREAMING IN H--?

EVEN THOUGH I'M THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY, I SWEAR I CAN HEAR THE DETONATION.

AND THE SKY ILLUMINATES.

THE PEOPLE OF DYSTOPIA, OF COURSE, HAVE NO IDEA WHAT CAUSED IT.

AH, DYSTOPIA. IT WILL TAKE THE PEOPLE TIME TO RECOVER FROM THE DAMAGE THAT NAMOR'S CREATURE DID. AND THEY WILL LOOK TO ME TO *CALM* THEM, ***PROTECT*** THEM.

VILLAINS ALWAYS TALK ABOUT CONQUERING THE WORLD, BUT THEY NEVER SEEM TO THINK PAST THAT. WHAT DO THEY *DO* ONCE THEY'VE CONQUERED IT?

THE ANSWER IS, OF COURSE, THEY MUST NOW *PROTECT* THE PEOPLE WHOM THEY WERE WILLING TO STEP ON TO ACHIEVE THAT POWER. OTHERWISE, WHAT IS THE *POINT?*

THE PEOPLE ARE, OF COURSE, WILLING TO GO ALONG, BECAUSE THEY HAD A TASTE OF WHAT THE WORLD CAN DO TO THEM IF I'M NOT THERE TO SERVE AS THEIR DEFENDER.

SO THEY REBUILD MY THRONE AND GROVEL IN FRONT OF ME.

FUNNY. I WAS ONE OF THE FIRST AVENGERS. AND THEN I BELONGED TO A GROUP CALLED THE DEFENDERS. AND I SEEM TO RECALL NAMOR AND THE TORCH WERE ALSO PART OF A GROUP.

BUT IN THE END, GROUPS AREN'T NECESSARY, I SUPPOSE. IF YOU'RE SUFFICIENTLY STRONG AND INGENIOUS ENOUGH, YOU DON'T NEED ANYBODY.

NOT WHEN YOU'RE...

THE MAESTRO

THE EDGE OF DYSTOPIA.
RICK JONES' SECRET BUNKER.

WHAT IS IT?

THE MINISTER BROUGHT IT OVER. HE THINKS WE CAN MAKE USE OF IT.

TO DO WHAT?

TO PUT AN *END* TO THE MAESTRO.

HOW IS THAT GOING TO DO IT? IS IT AN EXPLOSIVE?

EVEN BETTER, DAKORD.

IT'S DOCTOR DOOM'S *TIME MACHINE.*

DOCTOR DOOM? THAT LOSER WHO TOOK OVER DYSTOPIA FOR FIVE MINUTES?

THE SAME.

HOW'S IT GOING TO PUT AN END TO THE MAESTRO?

DON'T WORRY, JANIS, I'VE GOT THE PERFECT PLAN.

GRAMPS? WHAT'S THE PLAN?

WHAT?

DAMN.

BONUS STORIES

Though not written by Peter David, *Exiles #79-80* and *Abominations #1-3* also visited the harsh world of the Maestro.

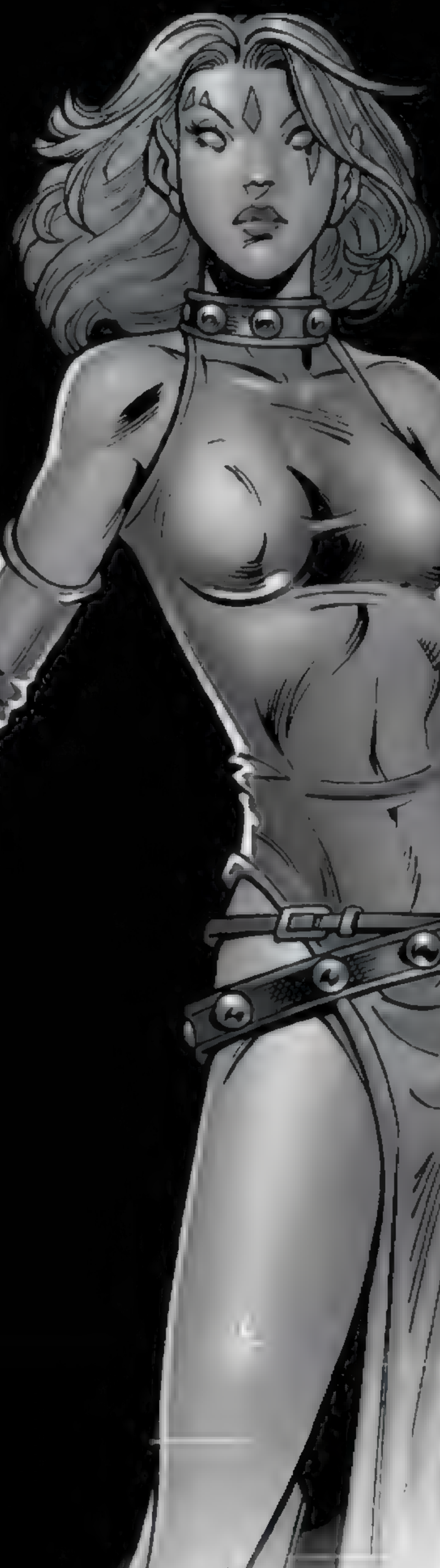
EXILES #79

Previously in EXILES:

Gathered together from their own separate realities, BLINK, SABRETOOTH, MORPH, LONGSHOT, SPIDER-MAN 2099, and HEATHER HUDSON risk their lives to save one imperiled Earth after another. From their headquarters in the "Crystal Palace"—an alien observatory outside space and time overlooking the countless realities that make up the Multiverse—the Exiles undertake their world-saving missions and often pay a terrible price.

Such was the case when they encountered the body-snatching, reality-warping mutant codenamed PROTEUS. After murdering Blink's boyfriend Mimic, Proteus used his own nearly limitless powers to jump to other universes in search of new victims. The Exiles have pursued him ever since.

In the futuristic world of 2099, Proteus took over the invulnerable body of HULK 2099 and used its massive power to fend off an attack by the Exiles. Proteus then fled to the world of the SQUADRON SUPREME, where he duped the mighty super-team into capturing the Exiles. They were then put on trial for altering the course of history in other realities—but the Exiles were able to convince the Squadron that their missions were just and necessary. The Exiles were freed to pursue Proteus, but only on the condition that POWER PRINCESS accompany them as their cosmic chaperone.



"I SORT OF *MISSED* THE LAST WAR--THE ONE WHERE ALL MY FRIENDS GOT KILLED.

"MOST OF WHAT I KNOW ABOUT IT, I GOT SECOND-HAND. TO BE HONEST, I HAVEN'T A CLUE HOW IT *STARTED*.

"NOT THAT IT MAKES MUCH DIFFERENCE. THE BOTTOM LINE IS I LOST EVERYONE I WAS *CLOSEST* TO.

"TAKE *CAPTAIN MARVEL*, FOR INSTANCE. I SHARED A BOND WITH HER MORE INTIMATE THAN I HAD WITH MY OWN WIFE.

"I WAS IN HER HEAD WHEN SHE *DIED*.

"OKAY, TECHNICALLY I WAS IN A PLACE CALLED THE *NEGAVERSE*, BUT I STILL FELT HER MIND FADE TO BLACK AS SHE STAGGERED THOSE LAST FEW STEPS.

"SHE *KNEW* SHE WAS A GONER, BUT BY GOD SHE WASN'T GOING DOWN WITHOUT BRINGING *ME* BACK HOME."

KLANK

BAKOOM

"I'VE SPENT EVERY NIGHT SINCE WISHING SHE *HADN'T BOTHERED.*"

WORLD FUTURE IMPERFECT TOUR

PART I OF II

WE HAD THIS WHOLE *TIME-SHARE* ARRANGEMENT, SEE? SAME GIG I HAD WITH TWO CAPTAIN MARVELS *BEFORE* HER--

--I'D BANG MY *WRIST-BANDS* TOGETHER AND CAPTAIN MARVEL WOULD APPEAR IN MY PLACE.

I'D COOL MY HEELS IN THE NEGAVERSE WHILE SHE SAVED THE DAY, THEN SHE'D BANG *HER* BANGLES AND, SHAZAM! *RICK JONES* RETURNS.

NEVER DREAMED I'D COME HOME TO *THIS.*

MOST OF MY PEEPS *ROASTED* WHEN THE NUKES HIT THE FAN. MY WIFE *MARLO* WAS AMONG 'EM.

BUT THERE WAS ONE GUY WHO ACTUALLY *PROSPERED.* SOMEONE I'M KINDA RESPONSIBLE FOR *CREATING.*

WHILE ALMOST EVERYONE ELSE WAS DYING FROM *FALLOUT,* MY OLD PAL JUST SOAKED UP THE *RADS* AND GOT STRONGER AND STRONGER AND STRONGER.

THE EXTRA JUICE JUST BROUGHT OUT THE *WORST* IN HIM.

HE'S BEEN A *TERROR* EVER SINCE, AND NO MATTER WHAT'S THROWN AT HIM, IT'S NEVER ENOUGH, BECAUSE, LET'S FACE IT--

--THE ONLY THING THAT COULD EVER STOP THE HULK... IS THE *HULK.*

THEN IT'S A LUCKY THING FOR YE THAT I HAPPENED ALONG, ENNIT, MISTER JONES?

YE KNOW, YE DINNAE BAT AN EYE WHEN I MENTIONED THA' I CAME FROM ANOTHER REALITY.

I TOLD YOU-- UNIVERSE-HOPPING IS OLD HAT FOR ME.

SO YE DID. AN' NOW YE WANT ME TAE FIND THIS BAD HULK AN' TAKE HIM DOWN A FEW PEGS?

"MAESTRO." HE CALLS HIMSELF THE MAESTRO THESE DAYS. FOLKS ARE TOO SCARED TO TELL HIM HOW DUMB IT SOUNDS.

AN' ARE YE NOT AFRAID O' HIM?

I STOPPED BEING AFRAID OF ANYTHING THE DAY I HELD MY WIFE IN A DUSTPAN.

RIGHT THEN, I'LL JUST BE NIPPIN' OFF TAE PICK ME A FIGHT.

NOT WITHOUT A WEAPON, YOU WON'T.

AND JUST SO WE'RE CLEAR-- I'M ASKING YOU TO KILL HIM.

TRUST ME, THERE'LL BE NOTHIN' LEFT O' THE BIG GALOOT WHEN I'M DONE WITH HIM.

THE CRYSTAL PALACE OUTSIDE TIME AND SPACE...

FIRST THINGS *FIRST.*

THIS DREADFUL LIGHTING HAS TO *GO.*

GUESS AGAIN, PRINCESS. OUR FIRST PRIORITY IS TO GET YOU AND SPIDER-MAN TO THE *INFIRMARY.*

I AM NOT ILL.

PROTEUS CAN'T STEAL YOUR BODY IF THERE'S *METAL* IN IT, SO I'M GOING TO IMPLANT A STEEL STRIP IN YOUR *HEAD* LIKE I DID FOR BLINK, MORPH AND SABRE--

=HHH= *YOU!* THIS LIGHT GIVES ME A HEADACHE. *FIX* IT!

Y-YES, SUBJECT-ZARDA!

REDUCING INTENSITY. SHIFTING TO HUMAN VISUAL SPECTRUM.

?

YOU NEVER TOLD ME YOU COULD DO THAT.

YOU NEVER *ASKED.*

NOW I SHALL OUTLINE A STRATEGY TO CAPTURE THIS BODYSNATCHING *HORROR* YOU PEOPLE UNLEASHED.

AT EASE, SOLDIER! YOU GOT A THING OR TWO TO LEARN ABOUT OUR *CHAIN OF COMMAND.*

I AM HERE AS A COURTESY TO YOU!

HOW MANY TIMES HAS YOUR ENEMY *ELUDED* YOU? HOW MANY PEOPLE HAS HE *SLAIN* ALONG THE WAY?

NOW WE SHALL FINALLY DEFEAT THE ONE YOU CALL *PROTEUS* BECAUSE YOU WILL ALL FOLLOW *MY* LEAD. UNDERSTOOD?

OW.

I DON'T CARE HOW YOU RAN THINGS BEFORE--THE *RESULTS* WERE A FLAT-OUT *DISASTER!*

I'VE HAD ALL I CAN STOMACH OF PRINCESS PAIN-IN-THE-BUTT. Y'WANNA REMIND HER WHO *REALLY* RUNS THIS TEAM?

ACTUALLY, *NO,* MISTER CREED.

SHE'S *RIGHT.* WE'VE MADE A MESS OF THINGS. I COULDN'T EVEN SAVE MY *BOYFRIEND.*

IF SHE WANTS THE JOB, SHE'S WELCOME TO IT.

I REALLY DON'T THINK *REVERSE PSYCHOLOGY* IS THE WAY TO GO, BLINK.

SHE'S *SERIOUS*, MORPH.

IF POWER PRINCESS THINKS SHE CAN DO BETTER, LET HER *TRY*. I HONESTLY HOPE SHE *SUCCEEDS*.

VERY GOOD, CHILD. *ADMITTING* YOUR OWN LIMITATIONS IS THE FIRST STEP TO *OVERCOMING* THEM.

LOOK, I DON'T CARE *WHO* CALLS THE SHOTS, AS LONG AS WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME PAGE.

BUT WE MIGHT BE MORE WILLING TO PLAY ALONG IF YOU CAME ACROSS A BIT LESS... *SEVERE?* MAYBE TAKE OFF THAT *HAT* ONCE IN A WHILE?

I FAIL TO SEE HOW THIS WILL MOTIVATE YOUR COMPLIANCE.

GUESS YOU NEVER HEARD THE ONE ABOUT "THE FACE THAT LAUNCHED A THOUSAND SHIPS"...

OKAY, POWER PRINCESS, *HERE'S* WHAT YOU'RE SO KEEN ON LEADING THE TROOPS INTO...

KLIK

IT'S A POST-NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST SCENARIO. THE PRINCIPAL POPULATION CENTER IN NORTH AMERICA IS A REBUILT CITY THEY CALL *DYSTOPIA*.

ANTI-MAGNETIC GENERATORS UNDERGROUND KEEP THE RADIATION LEVELS TOLERABLE, BUT THE WASTELAND BEYOND PRETTY MUCH GLOWS IN THE DARK.

THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN DYSTOPIA BARELY SCRAPE BY, AND HALF OF WHAT THEY CAN SCROUNGE THEY KICK UP TO THE MAN WHO *RULES* THEM, IF YOU CAN CALL HIM A MAN ANYMORE...

IN ALL THE UNIVERSES, THERE IS NO MORE POWERFUL, INTELLIGENT, OR *CORRUPT* VERSION OF THE HULK THAN *THIS* ONE--THE MAESTRO.

TEMPORAL SCANNERS INDICATE THAT EIGHTY YEARS FROM NOW HIS YOUNGER SELF WILL TIME-TRAVEL THERE AND CAUSE HIS DOWN-FALL. IT ALL WORKS ITSELF OUT, *IF* PROTEUS DOESN'T INTERFERE.

UNFORTUNATELY, I'M PRETTY SURE PROTEUS *LOVES* THE HULK BODY HE'S IN RIGHT NOW, AND HE'S LOOKING TO *UPGRADE* TO THE DELUXE MODEL.

GREAT. SO WE HAVE TO DUKE IT OUT WITH HULK-PROTEUS, *PLUS* WATCH OUR BACKS FOR AN EVEN *STRONGER* HULK?

ACTUALLY, I THINK I SEE *EXACTLY* HOW WE'LL PULL THIS OFF...

MUST'VE BEEN *SOME SHARK* BIT THAT SURF-BOARD.

YOU COULD SAY THAT.

IS THERE A *SILVER SURFER* WHERE YOU COME FROM?

DOESN'T RING A BELL, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE YUIR *IRON MAN* GOT CRACKED LIKE A LOBSTER.

I *WARNED* HIM NOT TO FIGHT THE MAESTRO ONE-ON-ONE, BUT TONY STARK NEVER WAS A VERY GOOD LISTENER.

ANYHOW, I DIDN'T BRING YOU DOWN HERE TO ADMIRE MY *COLLECTION.*

I BROUGHT YOU HERE TO GIVE YOU *THIS...*

A SUPER-TECH MUTANT NAMED *FORGE* MADE IT.

HE DESIGNED THE GUN SPECIFICALLY TO KILL THE MAESTRO, BUT THE *GRAVITY COPS* NABBED HIM BEFORE HE COULD USE IT.

HOW 'BOUT YOU TAKE IT AND GO *LEE HARVEY OSWALD* ON THE BIG GUY?

I, AH...IT'S *METAL*, ENNIT? I HAVE A *WEE PROBLEM* WITH METAL. CANNAE *TOUCH* THE STUFF.

SAY, WHAT KIND OF HULK *ARE* YOU?

OCH, YE'VE *NO IDEA*, MATE.

ON THE OTHER HAND, I'VE A TRICK OR TWO UP MY SLEEVE THAT YUIR MAESTRO'S *NEVER* SEEN.

JUST WRAP THE GUN IN *CLOTH* AN' LEAVE A HOLE NEAR THE TRIGGER.

OKAY. I'LL ADJUST THE GRIP TO FIT YOUR HAND.

HERE'S A *SCHEMATIC* OF THE MAESTRO'S NEW FORTRESS. THIS LITTLE DOODAD WILL GUIDE YOU STRAIGHT TO HIS MAIN RECEPTION HALL.

TODAY'S THE DAY HE GIVES ALL THE SUCK-UPS AND SELL-OUTS THEIR WEEKLY AUDIENCE--IT'S YOUR BEST CHANCE TO *NAIL* HIM.

PUT THIS OVER YOUR HEAD, AND YOU SHOULD BE PRETTY MUCH ABLE TO WALK RIGHT IN.

REALLY NOW? BECAUSE *STEALTH* IS HARDLY MY FORTE.

YOU DON'T *NEED* TO BE SNEAKY. *BIG AND GREEN* MEANS ONE THING TO FOLKS AROUND HERE: *GET OUT OF THE WAY.*

WON'T MY *HANDS* AN' *FEET* BE A DEAD GIVEAWAY?

YOU DON'T DIG HOW *SCARED* PEOPLE ARE OF THE MAESTRO. THEY WON'T SWEAT THE DETAILS.

THE ELEVATOR WILL BRING YOU UP NEXT TO THE MARKET SQUARE.

GOOD LUCK!

GO PUT BRUCE OUT OF HIS MISERY... AND EVERYONE ELSE'S...

CLUELESS WONDER, SO HE WAS, BUT *USEFUL.* I'LL HAVE TAE THANK HIM PROPERLY WHEN I'M RUNNIN' THE PLACE...

...THOUGH FROM THE LOOK OF THIS JUNK-PILE CITY, I MIGHT BE CHANGIN' MY NAME FROM "MAESTRO" TAE *MASTER-BLASTER.*

WHO RUNS BARTERTOWN...? =HEH=

WAS THAT *HIM?*

I *TOLD* YOU HE'S BIG!

YOU THERE! WAIT YOUR TURN!

YE REALLY SHOULD SACK YUIR GUARDS, MAESTRO.

THOUGHT I'D HAVE TAE FIGHT MY WAY IN THAT LAST STRETCH, BUT NONE OF 'EM SO MUCH AS QUESTIONED ME.

THAT IS BECAUSE I ORDERED THEM TO LET YOU PASS...

...PROTEUS.

...HOW...?

THE EXILES WERE ALWAYS A STEP *BEHIND* YOU. I SUGGESTED THEY SKIP *AHEAD*.

BUT...BUT...YE AN' YUIR *SUPER-FRIENDS* WERE MEANT TAE *STOP* THOSE BAMPOTS!

AN' WHAT'RE YE DOIN' GETTIN' COZY WI' *HIM*?!

APPARENTLY, THEY REALIZED THEY COULD DO *BUSINESS* WITH ME.

I *AM* A REASONABLE MAN, AFTER ALL, WHEREAS *YOU* ARE CRAZY ENOUGH TO THINK YOU COULD JUST MARCH IN HERE--

--AND *STEAL MY BODY!*

MAESTRO...

FORGE SENDS HIS REGARDS!

THROOM

CHOOM

=UNF= TAKE COVER!

BETTER YET...

BLINK

OCH, D'YE THINK ME *DISARMED?*

WE HAVE A *TRANSACTION* TAE COMPLETE, SO WE DO...

...I GET YUIR ENDLESS STRENGTH...

...AND YE GET SWEET OBLIVION. DEAL?

...UNH...

DEAL.

ARHH!

...PAIN... POISON...!

HEH, HEH.

THAT'D BE THE CHUNK OF *STEEL* IN MY *NOGGIN.*

YOU FELL FOR THE OL' *BAIT-AN'-SWITCH,* PROTEY.

...NO FAIR... NO--

THWIP

LIGHTS OUT, UGLY!

--=MMPH!=

WHRAK

RRRMPH!

KROOOOSHH

TIME TO *FINISH* THIS.

MY BLADE WILL *NOT* PENETRATE HIS HULK-SKIN.

IT WILL WITH *MY* ARM BEHIND IT.

...DID WE GET 'IM...?

SHUNK

YEARRRHH!

THAT GOT 'IM.

REMARKABLE.

:SNFF:
:SNFF:

AW, NO...

THAT THING I SAID ABOUT BEING A *REASONABLE* MAN...?

FORGET IT!

EXILES #80

"CONGRATULATIONS, IT'S A *BLOB.*"

I WAS BORN WITH FULL-BLOWN MUTANT POWERS--AN EIGHT-POUND LUMP OF WHITE *GOO* THAT CRIED LIKE A BABY AND FLOWED LIKE MERCURY.

I FIGURED OUT AS A TODDLER THAT MY PARENTS WERE HAPPIER IF I KEPT A NORMAL HUMAN SHAPE. AND I'M NOTHING IF NOT EAGER TO PLEASE.

BY THE TIME I STARTED SCHOOL, I'D PERFECTED THE ALL-AMERICAN BOY-NEXT-DOOR LOOK.

BUT AT HOME, ALONE WITH MY FOLKS, I'D RELAX AND JUST BE *ME.*

I WASN'T BEING A PHONY, OR ASHAMED OF WHO I WAS. IT WAS SIMPLY LESS *AWKWARD* THAT WAY.

I HAD A KNACK FOR BEING WHAT EVERYONE WANTED.

EVERYTHING CAME EASY FOR ME. SCHOOL, SPORTS, FRIENDS...

AND THEN *MOM* DIED OF LUNG CANCER WHEN I WAS THIRTEEN. THERE WAS NOTHING EASY ABOUT THAT.

IT *BROKE* DAD. HE JUST GOT SO...*SERIOUS,* AND THE HARDER I TRIED TO CHEER HIM UP, THE MORE HE WITHDREW.

MY CLOWNING AROUND FINALLY GOT SO OVER-THE-TOP THAT DAD PACKED ME OFF TO BOARDING SCHOOL. AT LEAST HE PICKED THE RIGHT ONE.

YEARS LATER, I ACTUALLY EARNED A MASTERS IN COMPUTER ENGINEERING AT ***XAVIER'S.*** SOMETIMES PEOPLE FORGET THEY REALLY ARE A ***SCHOOL.***

XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS

I ALSO EARNED A UNIFORM AND A CODENAME: ***MORPH,*** LEADER OF XAVIER'S JUNIOR SUPER-TEAM, THE ***NEW MUTANTS.***

NOW, ***THOSE*** KIDS APPRECIATED A GOOD LAUGH.

NEXT, I GRADUATED TO FULL-FLEDGED ***X-MEN*** STATUS.

I WAS EVEN A BELOVED MEMBER OF ***THE AVENGERS.*** I GOT MORE FAN MAIL THAN CAPTAIN AMERICA!

ALL OF IT CAME SO EASY...

...UNTIL THE DAY I GOT *DRAFTED* INTO AN ALTERNATE-UNIVERSE REPAIR SQUAD CALLED *THE EXILES*...AND NOTHING'S BEEN EASY EVER SINCE.

HRAHHRR!

=WHUNG=

WORLD TOUR FUTURE IMPERFECT

PART 2 OF 2

KRUNCH

=ARH!=

AND THAT'S OUR VERSION OF *SPIDER-MAN.* WE PICKED HIM UP A COUPLE OF UNIVERSES AGO.

I HARDLY KNOW THE GUY, BUT I'D HATE TO SEE HIM GO *JACKSON POLLOCK* ALL OVER THE WALL.

THE EVIL HULK THERE CALLS HIMSELF *THE MAESTRO.* WE WARNED HIM THAT *PROTEUS* WAS COMING TO STEAL HIS BODY.

NATURALLY, HE ENDS UP TRYING TO *KILL* US.

WE *ALWAYS* END UP FIGHTING ALL THE WRONG PEOPLE. THE *LAW OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES* WAS WRITTEN JUST FOR US...

SKRAKK

CASE IN POINT--OUR RUNNING BATTLE WITH ***PROTEUS.*** WE START OUT TRYING TO REUNITE A FAMILY AND END UP FACING THE SCARIEST MUTANT ***EVER.***

HE'S A SERIAL KILLER WHO STEALS PEOPLE'S BODIES AND USES THEM UP, ONE AFTER THE OTHER. HIS ONLY WEAKNESS IS ***METAL.***

PROTEUS RIPPED OUT THE ***HEART*** OF OUR TEAM WHEN HE SNATCHED ***MIMIC'S*** BODY AND LEFT IT A DEAD, DRIED-OUT HUSK.

AFTER THAT, HEATHER CAME UP WITH THE BRIGHT IDEA OF IMPLANTING A STRIP OF ***SURGICAL STEEL*** IN OUR SKULLS TO KEEP PROTEUS ***OUT.***

OF COURSE, I DON'T ACTUALLY HAVE A SKULL--OR BONES, FOR THAT MATTER--SO I JUST SHOVED A CHUNK OF ***METAL*** DEEP INTO MY SILLY-PUTTY HEAD.

ANYHOW, WE'VE CHASED PROTEUS ACROSS ***FIVE*** REALITIES, FROM ONE STOLEN BODY TO THE NEXT.

HIS LATEST "SHELL" BELONGED TO THE ***HULK*** OF 2099 A.D. IT'S BEEN HIS LONGEST-LASTING, MOST DANGEROUS FORM YET.

BUT NOW HE WANTS TO *TRADE UP* TO THE UNLIMITED STRENGTH OF THE MAESTRO'S BOD. NO WAY CAN WE LET *THAT* HAPPEN.

=urk=

YOU ACTUALLY TRIED TO *SCRATCH* ME? DON'T YOU HAVE *ANY* IDEA WHAT I AM?!

POWER PRINCESS IS NEW TO OUR CREW. *SHE'S* THE GENIUS WHO SAID WE SHOULD TEAM UP WITH MAESTRO.

BLINK HAS A BETTER IDEA-- *REMOVE* THE BIG GUY SO WE CAN CONCENTRATE ON OUR REAL TARGET-- PROTEUS-- WHO'S BURIED UNDER THE RUBBLE IN HERE.

HA!

BLOONK

EH?

WHAT HAVE I *DONE*--?

AW, DID PRECIOUS *VAPORIZE* HER LITTLE FRIEND?

ACTUALLY, SHE *TELEPORTED* SABRETOOTH, WHICH COULD BE VERY BAD IF SHE MEANT TO BLINK THE MAESTRO TO THE SOUTH POLE, OR THE OCEAN FLOOR...

...OR SOMEWHERE EVEN WORSE.

I...

I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!

BLINK

WHO'S NEXT?

...UNH...

...SAVE A DANCE FOR ME...

...=hkk=... HARD TO... BREATHE...

YOU'VE GOT INTERNAL INJURIES. STAY PUT.

SPIDEY ACTUALLY *VOLUNTEERED* TO JOIN OUR TEAM, WHICH, FOR A GENIUS SCIENTIST, WAS NOT THE SMARTEST MOVE.

MAYBE WE SHOULD'VE *WARNED* HIM THAT IF IT WEREN'T FOR BAD LUCK, WE'D HAVE NO LUCK AT ALL.

THOOM

LUCK IS WHAT LONGSHOT IS SUPPOSED TO BRING TO THE TEAM...

...BUT YOU HAVE TO BE RIGHT NEXT TO HIM FOR ANY TO RUB OFF.

C-CAN YOU... H-HEAR ME... MISTER CREED...?

P-PLEASE DON'T DIE...!

=...hkk... k-k...=

BLOONK

ISN'T THAT SWEET?

THWAK

=WHUNG=

GET YUIR BOGGIN' HANDS OFF *MY GIRL!*

IT TAKES ME HALF A SECOND TO REMEMBER *WHY* PROTEUS WOULD SAY THAT.

HE STILL CARRIES THE STOLEN *MEMORIES* OF EVERYONE HE EVER BODY-SNATCHED, INCLUDING *MIMIC.*

HE MAY BE DEAD, BUT HIS *LOVE* FOR BLINK WAS STRONG ENOUGH THAT IT JUST SAVED HER LIFE.

ARRHH!

THE EXILES *TOLD* ME YOUR WEAKNESS, PROTEUS!

YOU MAY BE THE FIRST MAN I EVER KILL WITH MY *ELBOWS...*

WAIT.

IF THE *MAESTRO* CAN KILL PROTEUS, THEN *LET* HIM.

IF NOT, AT LEAST THEY'LL WEAR EACH OTHER DOWN.

YE HAVE TAE *HIT* ME FIRST!

THAT'S BETTER...

WHAT... ...ARE YOU DOING?

NOTHIN' YE CANNAE *RECOVER* FROM... EVENTUALLY.

...CAN'T...

...CAN'T MOVE...!

YUIR SPINE'LL *HEAL*, MATE, BUT BY THEN IT'LL BE *ME* IN YUIR SKIN.

'COURSE, THOSE *TIN SLEEVES* OF YUIRS WILL HAVE TAE COME *OFF* FIRST...

SHWUP

BAD ENOUGH THAT HE STEALS BODIES, BUT PROTEUS CAN ALSO *WARP* THINGS WITH HIS MIND. FLESH, BONE, STEEL... *NOTHING* WITHSTANDS HIM.

HEY!

ZARK

ZARK

ZARK

ZARK

OCH, HOW COULD I FORGET THE MAESTRO'S WORTHLESS *PALACE GUARDS?*

KEEP FIRING! BACK HIM AWAY FROM THE *BOSS!*

I ALMOST FEEL SORRY FOR THEM...

...GUNS AREN'T MUCH GOOD WHEN THE LAWS OF PHYSICS GET TURNED AGAINST YOU.

AIEEE!

GYAHH!

NOW, ABOUT THOSE *SLEEVES.*

SHWUP SHWUP

THIS...CAN'T HAPPEN...TO *ME...!*

WE'VE ONLY FOUND ONE WAY TO STOP PROTEUS'S REALITY-WARP, BUT IT'S A *DOOZY...*

LONG-SHOT!

PROTEUS, I CANNOT ALLOW THIS.

AN' WHAT'S TAE KEEP ME FROM JUST SMASHIN' YE?

THAT'D BE ME!

I'M PRAYING HE USED UP MOST OF HIS HULK-STRENGTH, OR THIS'LL BE A VERY *SHORT* FIGHT.

YE *LOOK* TOUGH ENOUGH, MORPH, BUT IT'S ALL FOR SHOW, ENNIT?

THROOM

HE'S TRYING TO TURN ME INSIDE OUT. FEELS SICK--LIKE *MAGGOTS* IN MY VEINS.

Y'KNOW, IF I *HAD* VEINS...

KRAK

FOR A GUY WHO WEIGHS EIGHTY POUNDS, THAT LONGSHOT IS *FEARLESS.*

UP THIS CLOSE, HE *CANCELS OUT* THE REALITY-WHAMMY.

FINE! IF I CANNAE BEAT YUIR LUCK-POWER--

--I'LL JUST TAKE IT FOR MYSELF!

AGHH!

DO ALL OF YE HAVE THOSE BLEEDIN' METAL IMPLANTS?!

HE'S HURT... VULNERABLE...IF I CAN JUST--

GRAHHH!

SPLUT

PING

TINK

NO, NO, NO.

GOTTA THINK FAST--

--PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN ME AND--

SWISH

MORPH? IS THAT YOU...?

=HEH=

HEH-HA-HA

HAHAHAH

THIS IS SOO MUCH BETTER'N WHAT I CAME FOR!

MOST BODIES START WASTIN' AWAY THE MOMENT I JUMP IN, BUT THIS ONE FEELS DIFFERENT...

AND, LOOK! I CAN BE KEVIN MACTAGGERT AGAIN!

D'YE KNOW HOW MANY YEARS IT'S BEEN SINCE I'VE SEEN MY OWN FACE?!

WHO'D'VE THOUGHT MORPH WAS THE GLASS SLIPPER I'VE BEEN SEARCHIN' FOR?

I CAN BE ANYONE...

...PREY ON ANYONE...

...AND NEVER GET CAUGHT!

GET OUT OF HIM!

I THINK NOT, LONGSHOT.

I'D SAY THIS ONE'S A KEEPER.

IT'S YUIR LUCKY DAY, MAESTRO, I'LL NOT BE NEEDIN' YE AFTER ALL!

I'VE GOT BETTER THINGS TAE BE AN' PEOPLE TAE DO...

VOORRRRP

NO...

THIS... SHOULD'VE *WORKED*...THE PLAN WAS SOUND...

...WE HAD A STRONG ALLY... THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE...

WE'RE EXILES, PRINCESS. *NOTHIN'* GOES ACCORDIN' TO PLAN.

GET *OUT* OF MY HOUSE AND PRAY YOU *NEVER* MEET ME AGAIN!

YOU SOUNDED LIKE YOU *MEANT* THAT, PUP.

WHY *WOULDN'T* I, VICTOR?

SHUT UP, MAESTRO, BEFORE I BLINK YOUR FAMILY JEWELS TO THE *MOON*.

PROTEUS HAS TAKEN *TWO* OF US NOW! I SWEAR TO YOU, NEXT TIME IT'S HIM OR *ME*.

MARVEL® COMICS

ABOMINATIONS

DEC '96 #1

THE ABOMINATIONS™

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

BACK TO THE FUTURE... IMPERFECT!

FROM THE PAGES OF HULK!

THE FUTURE. A FUTURE. WEEKS AFTER THE END OF THE MAESTRO'S DESPOTIC RULE.

THE GRAVITY POLICE, THE MAESTRO'S CENTURION FORCE, WERE CREATED BY HIM TO KEEP THE PUBLIC OPPRESSED AND TERRORIZED.

AFTER THE MAESTRO WAS REMOVED BY HIS YOUNGER SELF, THE HULK, THE GRAVITY POLICE WERE POLITELY ASKED TO LEAVE THE CITY.

IN THE WORDS OF THE IMMORTAL JANIS JONES, 'HIT THE ROAD, JACK, AND DON'T YOU COME BACK NO MORE.'

DISBANDED AND DISUNITED, THIS SMALL AND TIRED FACTION OF EX-SOLDIERS WALK TO AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE IN AN UNCERTAIN DIRECTION.

CERTAIN ONLY THAT THEY HAVE RUN OUT OF FUEL AND SUPPLIES AND...

WATER!!

AHHHR!

SHOOMP!

SPLOOSH

HOLY FLARK! IT REALLY IS! WE'RE SA--

UHNGH... UHNGH... PLEASE

OH MY SOUL...

UHHHHHRRRR!

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

BLOOD RUSH

WRITER-IVAN VELEZ, JR. PENCILER-ANGEL MEDINA INKER-BRAD VANCATA
COLORIST-GLYNIS OLIVER LETTERER-JIM NOVAK
EDITOR-BOBBIE CHASE EDITOR IN CHIEF-BOB HARRAS

AIIIEK!!

YOU FORGOT TO SAY PRETTY PLEASE.

NOW...YOU HAVE A VERY SHORT TIME TO ANSWER MY QUESTIONS CORRECTLY. HESITATE AND I WILL EAT YOU ALL PERSONALLY. UNDERSTOOD?

Y...YES.

GOOD. WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

CASTLE MAESTRO.

THE OLD MONSTER STILL LIVES?

N...N...NO. HE'S BEEN DESTROYED.

WHAT?! WHAT DID I SAY ABOUT LYING?

HE'S NOT!! HE'S NOT!! PLEASE BELIEVE HIM!!

THE MAESTRO IS PRESUMED DEAD! THE CITY IS FREE NOW!

THE MAESTRO? GONE?

HEH HEH HAH HAH HAH!

WELL... WHAT DI'YA KNOW. HOW NICE FOR US ALL!

UP AND AT 'EM, MUTATES! SOUP KITCHEN'S OPEN!

HUH? WHA-- NO!!

BUT WE TOLD YOU EVERYTHING! YOU PROMISED!!

I PROMISED I WOULDN'T EAT YOU. I NEVER SAID THEY WOULDN'T!

RRRAAAWWRRRRR

KRUNCH!

AIIIIEEGHHHH--GCK

THE MAESTRO'S CASTLE, AND THE MESS THAT IS THE SURROUNDING CITY.

THESE DAYS OF FREEDOM HAVE MADE THINGS EXCITING AND FULL OF HOPE...

...AND HIGHLY DISORGANIZED.

YOU CALL YOURSELVES COPS?!

I CALL YOU TRASH LEFT-OVERS!! SEPTIC SCRAPINGS!! TOE FUNGUS!!

JEEZ, CHIRA. CHILL.

I'M HANDLING THIS, JANIS.

AND YOU, SLEEK, ARE THE FUNGIEST TOE FUNGUS OF THEM ALL!

UH, THANK YOU, POLICE CONTROLLER CHIRA, SIR.

QUIET!

I FOUGHT TO HAVE YOU ON THE FORCE. NOBODY TRUSTED A FLOATER EX-GRAVITY COP.

IN FACT, NOBODY WANTED ANY OF YOU MUCK-UPS ON THE FORCE!

BUT I DID. I THOUGHT YOU ALL HAD SOMETHING SPECIAL THAT WOULD PULL YOU OUT OF LOSER MODE AND MAKE YOU TRUE COPS OF THE LAW.

HEH. GO FOR THE GUILT.

THIS IS YOUR LAST WARNING! STOP PROVING ME WRONG!!

YOU'RE DISMISSED.

SNF...

JEEZ, SLEEK, YOU REALLY UPSET HER THIS TIME.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE SEE IN THEM. THEY'RE JUST CHILDREN.

CAPTAIN AGARN, DULY ELECTED LEADER OF THE NEW CITY...

IT SHOULD BE YOU LEADING THE CITY.

SHHH. HE'LL HEAR YOU. YOU DON'T WANT TO MAKE TROUBLE FOR YOURSELF.

I DON'T CARE. IT'S TRUE YOU WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR GETTING RID OF THE MAESTRO.

IT WAS THE STUDLY WHO ZAPPED HIM BACK IN TIME TO THAT FIRST GAMMA BOMB EXPLOSION.

YEAH, BUT LOOK IN THEIR EYES. YOU'LL SEE WARRIORS.

AND CERTAINLY TRUER FIGHTERS THAN SOME OTHERS.

HMPH.

...HIS RIGHT HAND, THE CYBERMERCHANT, UNIT...

...AND HIS TRUSTED ADVISORS, FRICKER AND FRACKER.

IT WAS YOU THAT BROUGHT THE HULK TO OUR TIME TO SAVE US FROM THE MAESTRO!

AGARN WON THE ELECTIONS FAIR AND SQUARE.

ELECTIONS CAN BE RIGGED.

IF AGARN WANTS TO LEAD SO BADLY, LET HIM. AS LONG AS I'M AROUND TO WATCH HIM.

PO AND SLEEK...

AND CHAR...

PO. YOU'RE SO COOL. IT'S BECAUSE YOU STICK UP FOR A TIN CAN LIKE ME THAT YOU GET INTO TROUBLE.

YOU'RE SO NOBLE THAT WAY.

THAT'S WHY I LOVE YOU SO MUCH.

UH... HI, CHAR. NICE TO SEE YOU.

HI, PO.

STOP SQUIRMING, RAI. THIS'LL MAKE THE RASH BETTER.

SHE'S SO NURTURING... AND SO BEAUTIFUL. IF ONLY--

PO!! I'M TALKING OVER HERE.

HUH? OH, RIGHT... I'M NOBLE.

YOU REALLY ARE. SO... IN HONOR OF OUR FRIENDSHIP AND STUFF...

...YOU'RE GONNA BE THE FIRST TO SEE MY FIRST MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE WELL BEING OF THE NEW CITY...

...MY TOTALLY RECONDITIONED, REWIRED, STATE-OF-THE-ART, FIRST CLASS PET...

MOK THE WAR DOG!

NOT MOK! HE'S GENTLE AS A MOUSE. I REWIRED HIS BRAIN AND EVEN MADE ARMOR FOR MY FRIENDS WITH HIS SPARE WEAPON PARTS.

SNF SNF SNF... WOOF.

HOLY FLARK!

SLEEK! ARE YOU CRAZY? THESE THINGS ARE FORBIDDEN! THEY'RE KILLERS!

BUT YOU CAN'T EVER TRUST A WAR DOG!

AW JEEZ.

BETTY!

BETTY-6, ONE OF THE TWELVE EX-MISTRESSES OF THE MAESTRO...

...AND LIBRITO, HER NEW SPECIAL FRIEND AND CO-CARETAKER OF THE CASTLE LIBRARY.

UH OH. I DON'T LIKE THIS.

LIKE WHAT? IT'S ONLY A LITTLE LEVER. NOTHING TO BE SCARED ABOUT.

WHAT IF IT'S ANOTHER HIDDEN BOMB, LIKE THE ONE THEY FOUND IN THE KITCHEN?

THE MAESTRO HAD BOOBY TRAPS ALL OVER THIS PLACE.

ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.

NO! DON'T!

AIEEEK!

WHOOSH!

OH, LIBRITO. DON'T BE SUCH A NERVOUS NICKY. IT'S JUST A HIDDEN DOOR.

W...WHERE ARE YOU G-G-GOING?

SWEETIE. DOORS ARE MADE FOR WALKING THROUGH.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN GO AWAY!! THAT ROOM IS MINE! I DIS-COVERED IT!!

LIBRARIAN. TELL YOUR ASSISTANT TO BE QUIET, OR SHE'LL BE PUNISHED.

IN YOUR CONDITION, YOU SHOULDN'T BE TAKING TOO MANY CHAN--

OH MY.

OOH. A SARCO-- SARCONUFUS... SARPONGALUS ...SAR--

SARCOPHAGUS. BETTY, WOULD YOU MIND IT TERRIBLY IF I FAINTED?

YES! NOW WE HAVE TO TELL SOME-ONE! WE'VE MADE A GREAT DISCOVERY! WE'LL BE FAMOUS! WE'LL--

WHY YOU--!!

COME, DEAR. PLEASE.

UGH! THAT ANNOYING GIRL! SHE SHOULD HAVE STAYED A TOY!

QUIET. THE CYBERSLIK IS WORKING.

CYBERSLIK... CYBERTOOLIST, TROUBLESHOOTER AND ALL AROUND NOT TOO NICE GUY.

FINALLY, SOME QUIET. I MEAN, REALLY...

HMM. THE SLIME COATING THE BOX... SEEMS TO BE A PRODUCT OF BIO-FUNCTIONING. IS SOMETHING ROTTING IN THERE?

OR IS SOMETHING ALIVE?

WHO OR WHAT? THIS MAKES ME UNEASY.

WHY? YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, CAPTAIN. WE CONTROL EVERY FACET OF THE CITY AND ITS TECHNOLOGY. SOON, WE'LL BE THE RICHEST ON THE PLANET.

NOT EVEN JANIS HAS A CLUE TO OUR REAL MOTIV--

AS IF THAT SNOT-NOSED LITTLE FLARK EVER MATTERED!

UH!!

CAPTAIN AGARN! THE TOWER ALARM!

IT'S PROBABLY JUST A DRILL, CYBERSLIK. KEEP WORKING ON THE PROBLEM.

THE CASTLE TOWER. HIGHEST POINT OF THE CITY.

WHY THE ANNOYING INTERRUPTION?!

TAKE A LOOK FOR YOURSELVES!

UNIT! USE YOUR CYBER-EYE!

YES, CAPTAIN. AS YOU COMMAN--

OH... OH MY... OH NO...

IT'S THE...THE ABOMINATION... AND...AND...

...AN ARMY OF MONSTERS.

WHAT? HUH? BUT HOW--

WE...WE'VE GOT TO RETREAT! RETREAT!! ABANDON SHIP!!

FLARK THIS!

OUT OF THE WAY! WE'VE GOT TO GET THE TROOPS!

YOU'LL BE SAFE IN MY SECRET FORTRESS OF SOLITUDE! AND MOK WILL PROTECT YOU!

EVERYBODY! FOLLOW ME!

AND SECURE THE DOORS!

TOO BAD! GET EVERYONE TO BATTLE POSITIONS!

CHIRA!

IS IT BAD?

ALL CIVILIANS RETREAT INTO THE SAFETY ZONES!

UH...WHAT SAFETY ZONES?

I DUNNO. MAKE SOME UP!

UH... OKAY, OKAY.

YOU HEARD HER, SLEEK! GET CHAR AND AS MANY OTHERS AS YOU CAN INTO THE SAFETY ZONES!

A DOG OF WAR?! I CAN'T KEEP THE KIDS IN HERE WITH THAT!!

SHOOSH, CHAR. HE'S CUTE. IS HE MADE OF THE SAME STUFF MY ARMOR'S MADE--

UH... HEY! WHO ARE YOU?

GO AWAY!! THIS IS MY HIDING PLACE!!

ALRIGHT, SOLDIERS! THE DOORS SHOULD HOLD THEM, BUT--

BOOM!

--BE PREPARED TO HIT THEM HARD AND LOW! TAKE 'EM OUT ONE BY ONE!!

BOOM!

OHGOSH

BRACE YOURSELVES! THEY'RE COM--

KUH-BOOM!

OH NO. MUTATES.

DON'T FEAR THEM, SOLDIERS! SEPARATE THEM!

RAWR!!!

THEIR STRENGTH LIES IN THEIR NUMBERS!

JUST CHOP THOSE NUMBERS DOWN!

BAM!

SQUEEE!

BOOK!

RAWRBIT!

JUS--

AURGH!

CHIRA!!

CHIRA...

DON'T...WASTE TIME. FIGHT..

I WILL. I PROMISE.

DON'T WORRY. I'VE GOT YOUR BACK--

UNGH...

PATHETIC CHILDREN.

URGHH!

KUH-

BOOOM!

I AM KING NOW. THE CASTLE IS MINE!!

KASPIN. COME.

YES, SIR.

GLORIOUS MUTATES!

REJECTED CHILDREN OF THE CITY! NOW TAKE WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY YOURS!

HUH? OH MY.

NO LONGER WILL YOU STARVE ON THEIR GARBAGE. NO LONGER WILL YOU SHIVER IN THE COLD NIGHT!

SIR? UPSTAIRS...

'SHE' IS HERE.

URR?

UPSTAIRS, IN THE SECRET CHAMBER.

MY GOD, KASPIN... IF YOU'RE WRONG...

NO, SIR. SHE'S THERE. IN THE BOX.

KROOSH!!

NO! HOW CAN THIS BE?!

HOW COULD HE HAVE DONE THIS TO HIS OWN BLOOD?!

NO. IT'S TRUE.

SHULK, MY POOR LOVE...

HOW... HOW LONG HAS SHE *BEEN* IN THERE, KASPIN?

SIR... I'M AFRAID TO GUESS... AT LEAST *SEVEN YEARS.*

SEVEN YEARS.

OH MY POOR SHULK. COULD EVEN THE MAESTRO BE *THAT* CRUEL?

CURSE YOU, MAESTRO!

I WILL WIPE ANY *TRACE* OF YOU FROM THE *FACE* OF THE EARTH!

NO LONGER WILL THE MONSTERS WHO CALL THEMSELVES *HUMAN* BE ALLOWED TO RUIN THIS WORLD!

GO FORTH, MUTATES! DESTROY EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD!

THE TIME FOR A NEW AGE HAS BEGUN!

THERRRE. IT REEKSSSS OF HUMANNNN.

KILL THEM!

DESTROY THEM!

YEAH, WELL, YOU DON'T SMELL TOO SWEET EITHER.

MOK! ATTACK ON MY SIGNAL. ONE... TWO--

STOP!!

I AM BETTY #6. AS FORMER CONSORT OF THE MAESTRO, AND CARRIER SUPREME OF HIS UNBORN ROYAL CHILD...

UNRH? THE MAESTRO'S UNBORN CHILD?

HUH? BETTY?

...I COMMAND YOU TO GO BACK INTO THE HOLE FROM WHENCE YOU CAME!!

IF ANY HARM COMES TO ME OR ANY OF MY FRIENDS, THE MAESTRO WILL RETURN FROM WHEREVER HE IS AND HUNT YOU DOWN ONE BY ONE!

IT WON'T BE PRETTY!

HOLY CHOW! YOU DID IT. THEY'RE WALKING AWAY!

UH, BETTY? WE HAVE TO TALK...

IS THIS TRUE? YOU'RE CARRYING HIS CHILD?

I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE.

BUT HOW--

WHO CARES ABOUT THAT FLARKIN' NONSENSE!

IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THOSE YUKKOS THINK BETTER OF BELIEVING THAT FLARKHEAD STORY!

IT'S TIME WE GET OUT OF HERE!

THE ROYAL BEDCHAMBER, WHERE THE ABOMINATION REMEMBERS...

SHE WAS SO BEAUTIFUL...

...THE FIERCEST OF US ALL. IN THE BEGINNING, SHE ALMOST DEFEATED THE MAESTRO ONE-ON-ONE...

ALMOST SAVED THE CITY FROM HIS CRUELTY...

...ALMOST. IN THE END, EVEN AFTER ALL OUR COMBINED EFFORTS, WE WERE DEFEATED...

AND HE MURDERED THREE VILLAGES TO PROVE HOW DEFEATED WE WERE. NOT ONE FAMILY WAS SPARED.

HOW COULD YOUR SOUL NOT BE STAINED FOREVER?

YOU WENT AFTER HIM ON YOUR OWN...

AND I LET YOU...

OH, MY POOR SHULK... AFTER ALL THESE YEARS... CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME?

SIR?

YOU DARE INTERRUPT ME?

BUT, SIR.

ONE OF THE GIRLS IN THE CASTLE. A GIRL NAMED BETTY. SHE SAID SHE WAS BEARING THE MAESTRO'S CHILD!

WHAT? BETTY. THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.

BRING HER TO ME.

SIR, SHE'S ESCAPED.

ESCAPED? NO!

THE MAESTRO WILL HAVE NO LEGACY AS LONG AS I AM AROUND!

HAVE HER HUNTED DOWN AND KILLED. HER CARCASS WILL BE A SUITABLE WEDDING GIFT FOR MY LOVELY BRIDE.

OOOHRR.

THE SEWERS BELOW THE CASTLE.

AN EASY PLACE TO BE LOST AND DESPERATE.

AND SCARED.

UH! WHAT'S THAT? BLOOD?

PO!!

YOU'RE THAT BETTY, AREN'T YOU? HEARD A FEW MUTATES SAY THEY WERE LOOKING FOR YOU. YOU'RE MARKED FOR DEATH, KID.

HUH? BUT--

SHOULDN'T BE TELLING FOLKS LIES THAT YOU'RE CARRYING THE MAESTRO'S BABY!

DON'T JUST STAND THERE, GAWKING! GIVE THE BUD A HAND!

AT LEAST IT BETTER BE A *LIE*. IF NOT, I'LL SERVE YOU UP ON A PLATTER *MYSELF*.

WELL, YOU'RE *JANIS*, RIGHT? YOU'LL GET US *OUT* OF THIS MESS.

YEAH, SURE. LET ME JUST PULL A *MIRACLE* OUT OF MY *POCKET*.

OOPS. FRESH OUT. SORRY.

GUESS WE ALL GOTTA WORK *TOGETHER* TO GET *OUT*, HUH?

SIGH.

PLOP

SNF

SNF

THEIR SMELL IS *FRESH*!

THEY'RE ESSSCAPINGGGGG.

GET THEM! GET HER!!

DEATH TO THE BETTY!

DEATH TO THE MAESTRO'S CHILD!

THE SECRET FACTORY.

ONCE HEADQUARTERS OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS.

RAAAAWRRR!

FLARK! THEY'VE FOUND US!

YOU! CYBERSLIK! SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT REWIR--

DON'T WORRY. I'M ON IT.

EVERYONE, STAND ON THE PANEL! WE'RE GOING TO A SAFE PLACE... AND TIME!

NOW!!!

OH MY.

NOW, JUST A DEAD END...

OR IS IT...

GOOD. GO ON AHEAD AND SEND THEM OUT. I'LL FOLLOW AFTER-WARDS!

JUST GOTTA HOLD OFF THESE CREEPAZOIDS.

HURRY UP!

DON'T RUSH ME! ONE MISTAKE AND WE'LL BE ATOMIZ--

WHOA.

SZXXXT!

THE EAST VILLAGE, NEW YORK. THE LATE NINETIES...

WE, THE HOMELESS, THE WRETCHED, THE CRIPPLED, THE POOR... THE SICK, THE OLD...THE THROWN-AWAY...

THUS ARE WE TREATED LIKE ABOMINATIONS ...THUS WE TAKE ON THE MANTLE...

...AS A STRUGGLE BETWEEN HOMELESS SQUATTERS AND THE LOCAL LAW REACHES A PEAK.

SOMEBODY SHOULD PUT 'EM ALL ON AN ISLAND...

THEN SINK IT.

...AS WE FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHT TO LIVE IN PEACE... AS GOD'S CHILDREN...AND RIGHTFUL DENIZENS OF THIS WORLD...

UNGH!

PLOONK

OH YEAH!! IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WAN--

HUH? WHAT'S GOING ON?!!

FIRE!!

BAM BAM BAMBAM

"...SO SHALL WE BE KNOWN FOREVER AS THE ABOMINATIONS."

WOW. COOL.

TO BE CONTINUED!

MARVEL COMICS

ABOMINATIONS

JAN '97 2

THE ABOMINATIONS™

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

FEEL THE BLOOD RUSH!

BACK IN PRESENT DAY NEW YORK, THE EAST VILLAGE. THE SQUATTERS' HEAVEN AND HELL.

FOR YEARS THERE'S BEEN TENSION BETWEEN THE HOMELESS AND THE POLICE.

TO ONE SIDE, IT'S ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT TERRITORY AND FAIRNESS.

TO THE OTHER, IT'S ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT PROTECTING THE LAND FOR DECENT FOLKS.

WRITER-
IVAN VELEZ JR.

PENCILLER-
ANGEL MEDINA

INKERS-
BRAD VANCATA & SCOTT KOBLISH

COLORIST-
GLYNIS OLIVER

LETTERER-
JIM NOVAK

EDITOR-
BOBBIE CHASE

EDITOR IN CHIEF-
BOB HARRAS

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

THE FADING DEAD

NOW, LIKE TOO MANY OTHER TIMES IN HUMAN HISTORY...

LOUSY STINKING TRASH GARBAGE.

OH YEAH, IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT--

...THEY GO TO WAR.

AND UNFORTUNATELY, OUR HEROES FROM THE FUTURE ARE STUCK IN THE MIDDLE OF IT. AS USUAL.

AWROO?

PANG

MOK, THE WAR DOG.

SLEEK; ROOKIE POLICEMAN OF THE NEW REGIME.

HIS BEST FRIEND AND FELLOW POLICEMAN, PO.

LIBRITO, CUSTODIAN OF THE CASTLE LIBRARY.

JANIS SAID WE'D BE SAFE HERE! FROM THE ABOMINATION... FROM THE MUTATES... FROM EVERYTHING!

CHAR, A YOUNG AND NURTURING WOMAN AND THE TWO ORPHANS UNDER HER WING, MOLLY AND POLLY.

AND CYBERSLIK; CYBER-MERCHANT, CYNIC, AND ALL AROUND NASTY GUY...

...ALL OF THEM, RUNNING FROM A WAR IN THE FUTURE, AND ENDING UP IN A WAR IN THE PAST.

FLARK!

SUCH ARE THEIR LIVES...

PREECHA AND HER DOG JED.

TH-THEY'RE SHOOTING AT US!! THEY ACTUALLY HAVE THE NERVE!

FELLOW COMRADES! DEFEND YOURSELVES!!

YEAH, WHAT YOU SAID!

MEEP.

KONK!

WAIT! STOP SHOOTING. THIS ISN'T RI--AWF!

SARGE'S BEEN HIT!

GET 'EM!

BAM! BAMBAMBAM BAM!

CHOOM

GOT TO PROTECT CHAR AND THE OTHE--

ARH!!

BAM! BAM!

OWOW-OWOW.

SLEEK. MOK. WE'RE IN A MESS. YOU KNOW WHAT WE GOTTA DO!

UH, YEAH... MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY.

RIGHT AFTER EEK AND HELP.

SZZZAP

WAR DOG!! TRY OUT YOUR SONIC BARK!!

ARF! ARF!

ARRGH! MY EARS!

HEY!!

WHA--?!

IT'S WAILING TIME!

MY GUN!!

DON'T YOU MEAN, ARGH, YOUR FACE?

BULLIES!

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE OR WHAT YOU HAVE AGAINST THESE PEOPLE...

WHAP!

KRAK!

...BUT ANYONE CAN SEE IT'S WRONG!

CAN'T FIND PEACE IN ANY TIME.

MAYBE PEOPLE ARE JUST PLAIN ROTTEN...

...NO MATTER WHAT CENTURY!!

KROOSH

DUCK!

GRRRR

AIIEEEK!

NOOO! HE'S GONNA EAT ME!!

MOK!! BAD DOG!!

DROP THE POLICEMAN NOW!

ERRWRRR...

WHOOMP

OKAY, FOLKS. WE'RE GONNA EVEN UP THE SIDES A LITTLE.

I, UH... HOPE YOU KNOW WHICH ENDS TO POINT.

HUH? IT'S A MIRACLE!

THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

AND PASS THE AMMO!

NOW, SCRAM!!

HA HAW!

WE DID IT! WE HELD OUR OWN!

WE WON!! THEY'LL FINALLY LEAVE US IN PEACE!

THEY WON IT FOR US! THEY'RE ANGELS!

BEWARE! DEVILS SOMETIMES COME IN ANGEL'S CLOTHING!

THOUGH THESE KIDS DO LOOK KINDA SWEET.

WE'RE NOT ANGELS! WE'RE JUST RUNNING AWAY FR--

OH... OH NO...

CHAR?

MISS CHAR?

CHAR!

SHE... SHE'S BEEN HIT, PO. SHE'S BLEEDING BAD!

I'LL GET HER SOME HELP. I PROMI-

HALT! THIS IS THE NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT!

PUT DOWN YOUR WEAPONS AND PUT YOUR HANDS UP.

YOU HAVE THREE SECONDS TO COMPLY.

THREE...

TWO...

MEANWHILE. IN THE FUTURE. IN THE MAESTRO'S CASTLE...

...WHERE ONCE THIS ERA'S EVIL VERSION OF THE HULK ENSLAVED AN ENTIRE NATION... AND NOW ANOTHER TWISTED USURPER HAS TAKEN HIS PLACE.

JANIS JONES, GRAND-DAUGHTER OF THE GREAT RICK JONES, IS BEING HELD CAPTIVE BY THIS ABOMINATION OF HER TIME...

MY FRIENDS ARE SAFE IN THE PAST. I'M SURE OF IT.

THE MUTATES HAVE NO CLUE OF WHAT THE TIME MACHINE IS, LET ALONE HOW TO USE IT.

IF I CAN FOCUS ON THAT MUCH, I CAN GET THROUGH THIS. I'LL NEVER TALK. EVEN IF THEY KILL ME.

...THE DARK LORD OF THE MUTATES, AND HATER OF ALL HUMANS...

...ESPECIALLY THOSE THAT ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE HIM.

WHERE *IS* SHE? WHERE IS THE BETTY?

IT IS *RUMORED* THAT SHE IS CARRYING THE MAESTRO'S CHILD. SHE MUST BE *DESTROYED*, AND WITH HER, *HIS BLOODLINE!*

PLEASE, LADY. TELL HIM WHAT HE WANTS TO KNOW.

BETTY WHO? BETTY BEEP? BETTY CRACKER?

AIEEERRH!

THAT'S *BOOP* AND *CROCKER*. IF YOU'RE *GOING* TO BE *OBNOXIOUS* BEFORE YOUR *DEATH*, YOU SHOULD AT *LEAST* GET THE *TRIVIA* RIGHT.

KASPIN, MAKE *SURE* SHE'S IN AS *MUCH PAIN* AS *POSSIBLE*. IF SHE *DOESN'T* TELL US WHAT WE WANT TO *KNOW* IN *ONE HOUR'S* TIME...

...FRY HER *BRAIN* TO A *CRISP!*

SNF.

YES, SIR.

AIEEERGH!

SHE DESERVES WHATEVER SHE GETS. SHE'S HUMAN.

THEIR TIME IS DONE.

IT'S BEEN SO MANY YEARS SINCE I WAS EXILED AND FORCED TO LIVE IN THE WASTELANDS OF AREA X.

THE HUMANS LEFT ALL OF THEIR MUTATES AND DEFORMED TO DIE THERE OR LIVE LIKE ANIMALS.

NOW THEY ARE THE ANIMALS.

AND I AM THE KING.

AND I HAVE HER... THE SHULK... JENNIFER.

AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF THINKING HER DEAD... TO FINALLY HAVE HER...

DON'T YOU TOUCH ME!!

FINE. YOU RESIST ME NOW...

...BUT EVENTUALLY, YOU'LL BE MINE.

IN THIS WORLD, YOU HAVE NO CHOICE. I AM KING. YOU'LL BE MY QUEEN...

KRAKK!

AWRRRRR!!

RAWR!

...OR YOU WILL DIE.

KASPIN AND JANIS.

HER WILL IS STRONG. SHE'LL NEVER BETRAY HER FRIENDS...AND IF I CONTINUE THE BRAIN-MELT, SHE'LL DIE.

PLIP

I'LL BE THE MURDERER...

BUT THAT'S WHAT THE ABOMINATION WANTS. I OWE HIM MY LOYALTY...

HE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO CARED FOR ME AFTER MY OWN PARENTS DESERTED ME. I KNOW HE HAS SOME GOOD INSIDE OF HIM.

BUT...

...I CAN'T LET HIM FIND THE BETTY AND KILL HER BABY.

THAT'S WRONG.

SWP SWP SWP

FLARK!

UNGH?

YOU! YOU FREED ME! HOW COME?

NEVER MIND THAT!

I'VE PUT THE OTHERS TO SLEEP. JUST GET OUT OF HERE AND NEVER COME BACK!!

HEY. NO PROBLEM.

ZZZZXX

ZZZZZRXT

I KNOW THE GOOD WILL COME OUT IN THE ABOMINATION. ALL IT NEEDS IS THE RIGHT CHANCE.

BACK TO THE PAST...AND THE RIOT IN PROGRESS AGAIN.

...THREE!

NOW! WE'RE SERIOUS!!

STOP IT!! PLEASE! WE'VE GOT TO GET SOME HELP FOR CHAR!!

GET OUT OF HERE!!

PD

PD

YPD

THIS IS OUR HOME!!

WHOK!

CAN'T YOU SEE SHE'S DYI--

CHAR...

PO!!

OH GOSH... HE FELL ON CHAR!

WILL YOU ALL JUST STOP?! CAN'T YOU SEE WE NEED HEL--

KUH-BOOM!

SUDDENLY, WITH A BELCH AND A ROAR, HE COMES TO THE SURFACE.

NO ONE ON THIS EARTH, PRESENT PAST OR FUTURE, HAS EVER BEEN SO APTLY NAMED.

ALL MOVEMENT COMES TO AN ABRUPT STOP... A FROZEN MOMENT IN TIME AS HORROR, EXCITEMENT AND DISBELIEF SEIZE ALL ONLOOKERS.

AND THOUGH OTHERS COME WITH HIM, THEY MIGHT AS WELL BE INVISIBLE...

...FOR HE IS THE ABOMINATION.

WHAT?!
OH MY GOSH... IS THAT WHO I THINK IT IS?
OH NO, PLEASE...
THANK GOODNESS. I THOUGHT THE BIG GALOOT WOULD NEVER GET HERE.
OH, COLE... WHAT A MESS. CAN'T THEY UNDERSTAND THAT THEY'RE NOT WANTED UP HERE?
WATTS, WE CAN'T REALLY BLAME THEM FOR TRYING, CAN WE?
NOPE. WE CAN'T.
A SMOKE BOMB! KOFF! WATCH YOURSELVES!
KOFF
KOFF
KOFF
SSSSSSSSSSS
A BOMB!
AND WE SHOULD'A BEEN TRYING ALONG WITH 'EM.
HEADS UP!
PUH-WOOF!
THEY'RE ALL GONE.
GOOD. MAYBE WE'LL FINALLY GET SOME FRESH AIR UP HERE.

BACK TO A CORRUPTED FUTURE AND A CITY UNDER SIEGE.

A CASTLE WITHOUT MERCY.

AWF!

WHOOMP

IDIOT!! FREAK!!

INSIDE, A BITTER KING AND HIS IMPASSIVE QUEEN HOLD THEIR SAD LITTLE COURT.

YOU'RE WORTHLESS!!

I SHOULD HAVE LEFT YOU TO ROT IN AREA X.

SIGH...YOU WILL GO AND FIND JANIS IMMEDIATELY. AND THEN YOU WILL KILL HER. IS THAT UNDERSTOOD, KASPIN?

IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?!

WHY GIVE IMPORTANT WORK TO CHILDREN...

PLOP

...WHEN THERE IS A PROFESSIONAL AROUND?

WHO DARES--

THE NAME'S QUARRY. BOUNTY HUNTER, TRACKER, ETCETERA, ETCETERA, ETCETERA.

YOU'VE GOT A HUMAN INFESTATION PROBLEM. PRETTY SOON THEY'LL BE GETTING OUT OF THEIR HIDEY HOLES AND PLOTTING REVOLTS ...ESPECIALLY IF THAT LITTLE REBEL THAT SLIPPED BY YOU IS OUT AND ABOUT.

I CAN GUARANTEE THAT THIS CITY WILL BE WIPED CLEAN OF ANY AND ALL HUMANS.

THEY'RE GOING TO NEED CLEANING UP, AND FAST. AS A RULER OF A BRAND NEW NATION, YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE THE TIME TO DEVOTE TO THE PROBLEM.

BEING A MUTATE MYSELF, I DON'T HAVE MUCH SYMPATHY FOR THE HUMANS. BASICALLY, THEY'RE GETTING WHAT THEY DESERVE. ALL I WOULD WANT FOR MYSELF IS--

...BUT YOU'LL GET TO KEEP YOUR LIFE AS WELL.

YOU HAVE THREE HOURS TO FIND JANIS. IF THE JOB IS DONE, THEN YOU'LL NOT ONLY GET A REWARD...

BRRRR...

AND MY PRICE WILL BE EXTREMELY... HEH HEH...

...REASONABLE.

GOOD. WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO WORK? I'M KING.

HE SHALL FIND JANIS AND THE BETTY, AND I WILL DESTROY THE MAESTRO'S UNBORN CHILD...

AND FINALLY, MY LOVE, WITH EVERY TRACE OF HIS BLOOD WIPED OUT, THIS WORLD WILL FINALLY BE OURS.

THE ABOMINATION'S WORLD!

KUH-

BOOM!

RAWR!!

ABOMINATION'S WORLD? TRUE ENOUGH.

GOODBYE, EMIL.

COME, BOY. LEAD ME TO THE BETTY. WE'VE GOT HARD WORK TO DO.

EMIL HAS BEEN TWISTED INTO A MONSTER BY YEARS OF PAIN AND REJECTION. I COULD ALMOST FEEL SORRY FOR HIM...

...IF I HAD ANY PITY LEFT!.

EMIL WAS RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING. IF BRUCE... IF THE MAESTRO DID MANAGE TO ENABLE A PREGNANCY AND HIS GENES ARE PASSED ON...

I JUST CAN'T RISK SOMEONE LIKE HIM EVER EXISTING AGAIN.

NOT AFTER ALL THAT'S HAPPENED TO THIS WORLD BECAUSE OF HIM.

HERE, MISS... SHE WENT THROUGH HERE.

HERE? BUT... I RECOG-NIZE IT... I--

I'M SCARED TO OPEN IT.

LORD.

IT'S JUST THE SAME... RICK JONES'S MEMORIUM.

SIGH... POOR RICK MUST BE DEAD BY NOW.

THEY ALL ARE.

AIIERRWRRR!

JUST A LITTLE MORE TIME...

BOY! WHERE IS THE BETTY? YOU SAID SHE WOULD BE HIDING HERE!

TELL ME!!

NO. IT'S HAPPENING TOO FAST.

NOT IN HERE. THROUGH HERE. THERE.

HUH?

SHE USED THE TIME MACHINE? OH NO...

PLEASE, MISS... CAN YOU LEAVE ME ALONE NOW? I TOLD YOU ALL I KNOW.

NO, BOY. IF I'M GOING TO FIND HER, I'M GOING TO NEED YOUR HELP.

NOW IF ONLY I CAN REMEMBER HOW REED *PROGRAMMED THIS THINGAMAJIG.* IT SHOULD HAVE RECORDED THE LAST DESTINATION.

HE ALWAYS *DID* HAVE A WAY OF MAKING THE *IMPOSSIBLE* RUN *EASIER* THAN A *CLOCK RADIO.*

MISS *SHULK?* WHERE ARE WE *GOING?*

SIGH. TO HAPPIER TIMES.

THE EAST VILLAGE. PRESENT DAY. AGAIN.

I HOPE YOU'RE NOT GONNA ASK US TO GO DOWN INTO THAT HOLE?

NAH. THE RIOT'S OVER. HOPEFULLY THE ABOMINATION AND HIS RAGGED LITTLE FRIENDS WILL ALL STAY DOWN THERE FOR A GOOD LONG TIME.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THIS HUGE CRATER...

NOT OUR JOB. JUST CALL DAMAGE CONTROL--

...AW GEEZ...

FWKSH

SH!

SNF...

BOY, CAN YOU SMELL IT? THE SMOKE... THE EXHAUST... THE FILTH AND LACK OF PURE OXYGEN?

W...WE'RE IN THE MOST WONDROUS CITY THAT EVER WAS, SNF. NEW YORK CITY.

IT'S SO...WHOLE AND SO ALIVE...I THOUGHT I'D NEVER SEE IT AGAIN.

NO. I CAN'T BE DISTRACTED. THERE'S NO TIME.

NOW, WHERE IS THE BETTY--

klik klik klik klik klik

OH.

FREEZE. DROP ANY WEAPONS AND PUT YOUR HANDS UP!

NOW!!

MEANWHILE, DOWN BELOW THE CITY STREETS...IN A WORLD OF SLUDGE AND VERMIN...

...A WORLD THAT'S ALSO CALLED HOME...

TO THE ABOMINATION...

WHY DO YOU DO THIS?!

WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO GO UP TOP?! DON'T YOU GET IT? YOU'RE NOT WANTED UP THERE!

...AND HIS "FAMILY".

MAYBE I SHOULD'A LEFT YOU ALL TO ROT IN JAIL OR SOME HORROR OF A CITY SHELTER!

BUT... WE GOT AS MUCH RIGHT TO BE UP TOP AS ANYONE ELSE. MONEY SHOULDN'T BE THE ONLY THING THAT STOPS PEOPLE FROM LIVING.

SIGH. YOU'RE NOT EVEN LISTENING. THINGS ARE THE WAY THEY *ARE*. THEY *AIN'T* GONNA CHANGE.

JUST GO. GET OUTTA MY FACE.

OH NO... OH LORD...

THIS CHILD... SHE'S GOING TO DIE...

PO IS OUT COLD. CHAR ISN'T GONNA *MAKE IT*, AND WE'RE *ALL* IN THE *HANDS* OF THE *ABOMINATION*, WHOM WE WERE *ALL ESCAPING FROM* IN THE *FIRST PLACE*.

OH, DEAR. IT'S *ALL* SUCH A *MESS*.

LIBRITO, *PLEASE*... YOU'RE GOING TO *SCARE* THE *CHIL*--

OH...

LADY. DO YOU HAVE A *TUMMY ACHE*?

URR... YES... A BIT...

OH NO... THE BABY ...IT'S COMING...

...CHAR... I...

URRR... WHERE IS SHE? WHERE'RE CHAR AND THE KIDS?

ARE... THEY SAFE?

PO...I... THEY...

WAIT! IS THAT--

THE ABOMINATION...

HE RUINED EVERYTHING!

EVERYTHING'S HIS FAULT! HE OVERTOOK OUR CITY. HE FORCED US TO RUN INTO THIS ROTTING PAST!

EVERYTHING!!

URR? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

BUT NOT IF WE GET TO HIM BEFORE HE CAN DO ANYTHING IN THE FUTURE...

TO BE CONTINUED...

RAHHHH!!!

NOT IF WE KILL HIM NOW!!

POW!!

MARVEL COMICS®

ABOMINATIONS™

FEB '97 3

THE ABOMINATIONS

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

™

FANTASTIC FINAL ISSUE!

THE FUTURE...

...FIGHTS THE PAST.

WHICH WILL SURVIVE?

BLUR OF TIME

WRITER- IVAN VELEZ JR.
PENCILER- ANGEL MEDINA
INKER- BRAD VANCATA
COLORIST- GLYNIS OLIVER
LETTERER- JIM NOVAK
EDITOR- BOBBIE CHASE
EDITOR IN CHIEF-
BOB HARRAS

WE WERE ALL IN THE SEWERS. WE WERE ALL SUPPOSED TO BE SAFE. IT ALL HAPPENED SO FAST... AND I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND IT ALL.

THERE WERE THESE SPECIAL CHILDREN WE LEARNED LATER WERE FROM THE FUTURE... AND THEY HAD A LOT OF ANGER FOR THE ABOMINATION.

KUH-

RAM

NOT THE ABOMINATION WHO TOOK CARE OF THE DOWN-AND-OUT AND NEEDY IN THE NEW YORK CITY SEWER SYSTEM.

NO. THEY WERE ANGRY AT THE ABOMINATION FROM THEIR FUTURE... AN EVIL ABOMINATION THEY HAD TO RUN INTO THE PAST TO GET AWAY FROM.

ONLY THEY WERE HAVING A LOT OF TROUBLE SEEING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO.

SO THE ABOMINATION OF THE PAST WAS GETTING HATE RESERVED FOR THE ABOMINATION OF THE FUTURE... FOR SINS HE HADN'T EVEN COMMITTED YET.

KANG!

THE ABOMINATION.

PO.

WHAT COULD ANY OF US DO... IT WAS ALL SO STUPID AND POINTLESS. FIGHTING ALWAYS IS.

ARRRRGH!

STOP...PUH... PLEASE...

MY NAME IS PREECHA, AND I WAS TOO SCARED TO THINK STRAIGHT.

MEEP?

CYBERSLIK.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO HIM!? YOU'RE GOING TO GET HIM MAD!

ROUST. JOUST. GET THE OTHERS AND GET THEM TO SAFETY! ROUST.!!

WATTS.

SNF. LET HIM ALONE!! HE'S A GOOD GUY!!

ROUST AND JOUST.

MOK THE WARDOG.

PO! PLEASE! STOP!!

FLARK.

EWP?

MOK. GET READY.

SLEEK.

FLO AND MO.

SNF... CHAR... WAKE UP...

CHAR.

LIBRITO.

OHNOOH-NOOHNO... PLEASE... NOT NOW...

BETTY?

I'M SORRY, LIBRITO... MY BABY'S COMING...

BETTY-6.

ENOUGH!!

THAT'S ABOUT ALL I CAN TAKE OF YOUR NONSENSE!

KLANG!

KLH-

SKKKT

POW!

UOOMPH!

PO!!

ARRGH!

ARF ARF AARRFFF!!

MOK! ATTACK!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT PROBLEM YOU'VE GOT WITH ME, BUT BELIEVE YOU ME...

YOU'RE GONNA WISH YOU NEVER LAID EYES ON ME...

OH NO NO NO...

STUPID PEOPLE... FIGHTING LIKE ANIMALS...

AND ALL THE TIME THIS POOR LITTLE GIRL HAS GONE AND DIED...

AAEEEERRK!

MEANWHILE, JUST ABOVE THEM, ON THE STREETS OF NEW YORK.

ONLY, TIME WAS SLIPPING AWAY FROM ME SO QUICKLY...

THE PAIN... DON'T KNOW IF I CAN TAKE IT ANYMORE...

THE END IS SO NEAR. I CAN FEEL IT.

KASPIN, THE LITTLEST MUTATE...

SHHH. TELL ME, BOY. IS THE GIRL NEARBY?

HOLD ON, BOY.

Y...YES. UNDER.

--OOH!

MISS SHULK? THE POLICE-MEN LOOK VERY ANGRY.

NOT ANGRY. SCARED.

LIKE I AM.

MISS SHULK ...YOUR BRAIN... THERE'S SOME-THING VERY WRONG...

MY NAME IS J--- THE SHULK. I CAME HERE TO THE PAST, NOT TO REMI-NISCE OR MOURN A WORLD I HAVE LOST, BUT TO FIND A YOUNG PREGNANT GIRL WHO USED A MACHINE TO HIDE IN THE PAST.

I CAME TO COMMIT MUR-DER... TO KILL ALL TRACES OF MY COUSIN'S BLOOD-LINE... TO ENSURE ONCE AND FOR ALL THAT THE HORROR OF THE MAESTRO'S EXISTENCE WOULD NEVER HAVE A CHANCE TO GROW AGAIN.

IT'LL ALL BE OVER SOON.

SHE... SHE'S GONE!

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

I DUNNO. I JUST KNOW I AIN'T GOING AFTER HER.

KLH-BOOM!

ACROSS A CENTURY OF TIME...

...IN THE FUTURE CHAOS THAT WAS ONCE THE MAESTRO'S CASTLE...

...A CITY THAT NOW BELONGS TO THE ABOMINATION...

...ONCE SHUNNED MUTATES NOW HOLD ROYAL COURT.

AND TRIBUTES TO A NEW KING ARE PRESENTED.

L...ORD A... BOMINATION. I P... RESENT TO YOU...

...A T... ASTY M... ORSEL.

AWPH!

PLOP!

NO... PLEASE...

AGARN, MY LOVE ...WHY HAVE YOU DESERTED ME...?

AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF LOYAL SERVICE...YOU LEAVE ME TO DIE?

QUARRY IS TAKING MUCH TOO LONG TO RETRIEVE THE PUNY JANIS. IF HE DARES TRICK ME IN SOME WAY...

...ACH. MY BRAIN'S TOO FULL OF DOUBTS. EVER SINCE MY BEAUTIFUL SHULK BETRAYED ME AND ESCAPED...

...I'M THE KING OF A KINGDOM OF MONSTERS... AND WITHOUT MY PRECIOUS QUEEN, I'M REALLY NOTHING AT ALL.

AS USUAL.

WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

I THOUGHT EXCEPT FOR JANIS, ALL THE HUMANS HAD BEEN FLUSHED OUT AND KILLED. I GUESS I WAS WRONG.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO DIE? BROILED WITH MUSHROOMS... OR IN A NICE SOUFFLE?

I... PLEASE. I'M NOT FULLY HUMAN ANYMORE. HARDLY ANY REAL MEAT LEFT ON ME AT ALL... CERTAINLY NOT ENOUGH FOR A MEAL.

A...AND...AND I HAVE SO MANY USES. IT WOULD BE A S... SHAME TO WASTE ME AND...

USES?

Y...YES! I'M A C...C... CYBERTECH. I HAVE A VAST KNOWLEDGE OF CYBER-TECHNOLOGY AS WELL AS C... CONSIDERABLE ABILITIES.

...I...IN... INCLUDING THE CREATION AND OUTFITTING OF CYBERNETIC PROSTHESIS AND EXTENSIONS.

EXTENSIONS?

HMMM.

DOWN IN THE CASTLE SEWERS...

...JANIS JONES RUNS FOR HER LIFE.

OKAY OKAY ...WHAT DO I DO...WHAT?!

I... I'LL DOUBLE BACK TO THE TIME MACHINE...

MAKE SURE THE OTHERS ARE OKAY... AND FIND THE STUDLY. YEAH. THAT'S IT.

SPOOSH SPOOSH

NOBODY CAN BEAT THE HULK, AND HE'LL HELP US... JUST LIKE BEFORE.

AHAH!

AND THE HUNTER, QUARRY, FINDS HIS PREY.

THERE SHE IS. YOU HAD A GOOD RUN, KID...

...AND NOW IT'S GONNA END.

BACK IN THE PAST ...IN ANOTHER SEWER...

...AND ANOTHER WORLD OF PAIN.

URGHHHHH...

...UH UH UH...

IS BETTY GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT?

UH UH UH... URRRRGH!

DUNNO. HOPEFULLY. HAVIN' A BABY CAN BE SERIOUS BUSINESS.

I SHOULD BE SMART LIKE THE REST OF THE FOLKS DOWN HERE AND HIDE UNTIL AFTER THE FIGHT'S OVER.

SIGH. HELP ME REMOVE SOME OF THIS ARMOR.

KROONG

DUCK!!

OH!!

WHAM!

WILL YOU PLEASE ALL JUST STOP IT!

SORRY.

DON'T WORRY, PO! I GOT YOUR BACK! ABOMINATION OR NO ABOMINATION!

I GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE.

I'M A CYBERTECH. NOT A FIGHTER.

--HERE.

OH MY.

YOU THERE. WHERE IS THE BETTY?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT. I--

KASPIN. DOES HE KNOW?

Y... YES. HE DOES.

I'M NOT GONNA GET MY FLARKING TIN BUTT CRUSHED FOR NOBODY. I DIDN'T ASK TO BE--

HE'S RIGHT. I LIED. SHE'S DOWN THAT WAY.

PLEASE DON'T HURT ME.

HUMPH.

KASPIN. STAY HERE. YOUR SERVICES ARE NO LONGER NEEDED.

WHAT DID I DO? SHE WANTS THE BETTY!

ZWIP

SHE'LL HARM HER... AND THE BABY!

NO. CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN. HAVE TO USE MY HIP BLASTER AND--

SPOOM

YOU SHOT ME IN THE BACK, BUCKO.

BIG MISTAKE.

MEANWHILE...

I SAID...

...ENOUGH!!

WHAM!

I SAVE YOUR ASHES FROM THE POLICE. I ALLOW YOU TO ENTER MY HOME...

...AND THIS IS HOW YOU REPAY ME?!

THAT'S RIGHT! WHAT'CHOO GONNA DO ABOUT IT?

UH OH.

THAT'S WHAT I'M GONNA DO ABOUT IT.

NOW BE QUIET! I WANT SOME PEACE AND QUIET AROUND HERE!

PREECHA. HOW ARE THINGS GOING?

THINGS HAVE BEEN A WHOLE LOT BETTER.

SHHH. IT'LL BE OKAY.

UH UH UH AIEEEEE...

WE'LL DEAL. JUST LIKE WE ALWAYS DO.

YOU ALWAYS WERE A BIT BLASÉ ABOUT THINGS, EMIL.

WHO?!

KLANG

DON'T TELL HER ANYTHING! SHE'S AN ASSASSIN! SHE'S AFTER THE BETTY!

THAT'S RIGHT. AN ASSASSIN.

10

NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE SOMEONE TO ASSASSINATE.

NO. SHE'S PROTECTED AS LONG AS SHE'S IN MY HOME.

YOU'LL DO NOTHING BUT ANSWER MY QUESTIONS.

GRRRRRRR... DON'T FORCE ME TO HURT YOU, EMIL.

SO YOU KNOW MY NAME. SO WHAT.

YOU'RE STILL NOT GONNA STOP ME FROM SNAPPING YOUR SPINE IN HALF IF YOU DON'T STEP AWAY AND TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON!

I WARNED YOU.

ONCE AGAIN... BACK TO THE FUTURE...

...AS A DESPERATE JANIS FINALLY REACHES HER DESTINATION.

THE TIME MACHINE. FINALLY!

OHGOSH OHGOSH OHGOSH HE'S RIGHT BEHIND ME! I CAN HEAR HIM!

GOTTA MAKE SURE THE PRO-GRAM'S RIGHT. I WANT TO GO TO THE EXACT POINT IN TIME THE OTHERS WENT...

WAIT! SOMEBODY'S MESSED WITH THIS. BUT WH--

OH GOSH, OH GOSH!

HAH HAHHAH!

LITTLE GIRL. YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN GET AWAY?!

THE PROGRAM'S RUNNI--

HAH HAH HAH! NO ONE ESCAPES ME!

NO ONE!

AND SO, QUARRY AND PREY DISAPPEAR INTO THE TIME-STREAM...*

GET AWAY-

FWASH

FLARK! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?! WAIT!!

*FOR MORE ON WHERE JANIS AND QUARRY ENDED UP, CHECK OUT HULK ISSUE #443 AND SO ON --BOMBASTIC BOBBIE.

...PERHAPS NEVER TO BE SEEN IN THIS TIME AGAIN.

THE NEXT DAY, IN THE SAME CORRUPTED CITY OF THE FUTURE.

THE ABOMINATION REGARDS HIS NEW APPENDAGES.

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH YOUR NEW ARM AND EYE, LORD ABOMINATION?

THAT'S KING ABOMINATION.

AND, YES, I AM. HOW COULD I NOT BE? FOR THE FIRST TIME IN DECADES, I ACTUALLY FEEL...

...SPIFFY.

UNIT, YOU HAVE EARNED YOUR KEEP. YOU WILL BE SPARED ...AT LEAST UNTIL I GROW TIRED OF YOU.

THANK YOU, MY L-- MY KING.

ABOUT THE MACHINE. ARE YOU SURE THAT THERE IS NO CHANCE OF A MISTAKE...? THE GIRL AND THE BOUNTY HUNTER...

NO, MY KING. THE REPORTS FROM THE MUTATES INDICATE THAT THEY HAVE INDEED USED A TIME MACHINE HIDDEN IN THE OLD FACTORY.

I'M AFRAID THAT THE SHULK HAS USED THE SAME METHOD OF ESCAPE.

KA-BOOOM!

MY KING... ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO DO THIS? YOU CAN GO BACK INTO TIME AND RETRIEVE THEM IF YOU WISH. I CAN RESCIND THE ORDER TO DESTROY THE FACTORY--

NO.

THE PAST IS DEAD.

LET IT FADE AWAY.

BACK IN TIME, TO THE NEW YORK CITY SEWERS...

...WHERE TWO GAMMA-SPAWNED POWERHOUSES BATTLE TO THE DEATH.

KY4 #

BOOM

UNGH!

I ACTUALLY FELT THAT. I--

SHUT UP--

--AND DIE!!

BELIEVE ME, I'M DOING YOU A FAVOR.

YOU DON'T WANT TO BE AROUND FOR THE FUTURE.

KA-BAM

BOOM

URRRR... UNGH!

OOPH!

JUST A... LITTLE MORE, SLEEK... IT'S COMING...

CHOING!

I'M FREE!

WE'RE FREE!

QUICK! WE GOTTA STOP HER FROM HURTING BETTY!

BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND! ISN'T THAT THE SHULK? WASN'T SHE ONE OF THE ORIGINAL FREEDOM FIGHTERS AGAINST THE MAESTRO?

WHY WOULD SHE WANT TO HURT BETTY?

YOU'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND, AND I DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO EXPLAIN!

THE BABY HAS TO DIE!!

DOOM!

JUST KEEP OUT OF MY WAY!!

MOK!!

YAAAIIII!

KLUH-

RAK!

KLUH-RAK!

UNHHH!

OH NO

ALL OF YOU!!

PO! WATCH OU--

KROOOSH!

DON'T YOU GET IT.!!?

I'M SAVING YOU ALL...YOUR WORLD ...MAYBE EVEN YOUR FUTURE!

NOTHING LIKE THE MAESTRO MUST EVER EXIST AGAIN. NOT EVEN IF IT'S A CHIL--

WAAAHHH-HHHHHHH WAHHHHH

WAHHHHH

NO! YOU'RE NOT GONNA HURT BETTY'S BABY! I...I WON'T LET YOU! I--

PREECHA, GET HELP.

OUT OF THE WAY!

OOPH!

JUST GIVE IT TO ME. IT'LL BE QUICK... PAINLESS.

I PROMISE.

NO!

THEN YOU'VE MADE YOUR CHOI--

FROM OUT OF THE SHADOWS THEY COME ...FROM NOOKS AND CRANNIES AND PILES OF DEBRIS...LIKE RATS...

...ONLY FILLED WITH NOBLE OUTRAGE.

NO! GO AWAY!

LEAVE HER ALONE!

I SWEAR, I'LL CONK YOU ONE, I WILL!

BABY KILLER!

MONSTER!!

IT'S TRUE... I AM A MONSTER...

I...BUT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...YOU HAVEN'T SEEN WHAT I'VE SEEN...

YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE MILLIONS DEAD FROM GAMMA BOMBS ...THE CITIES REDUCED TO ASH...EVERY LOVED ONE AND THING...

NO. THE MAESTRO'S BLOODLINE MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE. THE CURSE OF THE GAMMAS MUST END ONCE AND FOR ALL.

BUH...BUT THE MAESTRO WASN'T THE BABY'S FATHER! I JUST LIED TO SAVE MYSELF FROM THE MUTATES.

I'M SORRY, BUT YOU CAN'T BE BELIEVED.

YOU'LL SAY ANYTHING TO SAVE THE CHILD. I JUST CAN'T RISK IT.

I'M SORRY. I--

YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE SURVIVORS STARVE AND DIE...OR ENSLAVED BY A PETTY AND CRUEL TYRANT KING...

...YOU HAVEN'T BEEN LOCKED AWAY LIKE I HAVE FOR SEVEN LONG YEARS...NOT EVEN ALLOWED THE LUXURY OF DYING GRACEFULLY, NEVER ESCAPING THE HORROR...

...GCK...

OH NO... I...

...NOT NOW ...NOT YET... I--

GCK... GCK...

KROOM!

I'M SORRY, MISS SHULK...BUT I CAN'T LET YOU DO THIS.

...BOY... GCK...NO...

WHERE IS SHE? I'LL KILL HER!!

SNF. IT WOULD BE WRONG.

THUD!

UNGHHH...

THUD!

SNF. TOO LATE.

GCK... GCK...

EMIL... GCK...

COME... CLOSER...

BUT...I...I DON'T KNOW YOU. I--

"SHE SAID ONE THING TO HIM... ONE THING THAT ONLY HE HEARD...AND TO THIS DAY HE WON'T TELL.

"AND THEN SHE SIGHED AND DIED.

"AND YOU WANNA KNOW SOMETHING ELSE?

"SHE LOOKED GLAD TO GO.

"AND THAT'S THE STORY OF HOW LITTLE BRUCE WILLIS SYLVESTER CHAN WAS BORN.

"WE STILL LIVE UNDER THE CITY WITH THE ABOMINATION AND THE OTHERS.

"LIBRITO IS PROVING TO BE A WONDERFUL FATHER... AND NOT SO BAD A HUSBAND.

"OF COURSE, THAT WAS MONTHS AGO.

"FLO AND JO... THE CHILDREN THAT CAME WITH US... THEY STILL MISS CHAR TERRIBLY. AND SO DO I...

"...BUT THEY'RE DEALING... AND THEY HAVE GOOD FRIENDS IN CHIMI AND KASPIN.

"WE DON'T MIND, REALLY. IT'S STILL A LOT BETTER THAN WHERE WE CAME FROM.

"AND THE COMPANY IS WONDERFUL.

"IT'S SO NICE TO SEE REAL JOY IN THEIR FACES.

"SLEEK SPENDS A LOT OF TIME MAKING GADGETS FOR THE REST OF US, WHEN HE'S NOT RELAXING OR PLAYING WITH MOK.

"AND PO STILL BELIEVES THAT JANIS WILL SHOW UP ANY TIME AND TAKE THEM ALL BACK INTO THE FU-TURE SO THEY CAN SAVE THE CITY.

"IN THE MEANTIME, HE AND PREECHA ARE ACTUALLY LEARNING THINGS ABOUT EACH OTHER... THE HISTORY OF THE FUTURE AND WHATNOT...

"...AND ACTUALLY MAKING A STRATE-GY TO PREVENT SOME OF THE BAD STUFF WE KNOW IS GOING TO HAPPEN. PO LOVES THIS STUFF.

"I SAY, GOOD FOR HIM. THE TIME FOR FIGHTING IS OVER. IT'S TIME TO USE OUR MINDS... AND ENJOY LIFE FOR A CHANGE.

"UH, AT LEAST I HOPE THEY'RE TOY WEAPONS.

"AND THE ABOMINATION ...HE'S BEEN AFFECTED BY WHAT HAPPENED MORE THAN ANYONE.

"EVEN CYBERSLIK, THE NASTIEST OF US ALL, SEEMS TO BE IN A BETTER MOOD EVERY DAY THAT PASSES.

"HE AND ROUST AND JOUST HAVE A GOOD OLD TIME MAKING TOY WEAPONS AND PLAYING COPS AND ROBBERS.

"HE BUILT TWO MEMORIALS IN THEIR OLD GRAVEYARD. ONE FOR CHAR... AND ONE FOR THE SHULK.

CHAR

JENNIFER WALTERS

"WHEN SHE DIED, SHE TOLD HIM HER NAME...

"AND THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE SHE SAID, THAT HE'LL NEVER TELL US... AND FRANKLY, I NEVER WANT TO KNOW.

"STILL, AT TIMES, HE'LL JUST STAND AT HER GRAVE FOR HOURS... AND HIS EYES WILL GET REAL WET.

"AND AT NIGHT...WHEN MOST OF THE SURFACE FOLK ARE ASLEEP... WE'LL ALL GO UP FOR A LOOK...

"AND SOMETIMES, WE EVEN TAKE PART IN LITTLE MISSIONS.

"YOU KNOW, SAVE A FEW PEOPLE HERE AND THERE...HELP MAKE THE WORLD SAFE FOR HUMANITY AND ALL THAT GOOD STUFF.

"WE'RE GOOD AS A TEAM, AND WE KNOW IT.

"SO WHAT IF THIS ISN'T OUR PROPER PLACE OR TIME. WE'RE HERE, AND WE'LL MAKE THE BEST OF IT.

"MAYBE WE CAN EVEN HELP THIS TIME NOT TURN INTO THE MESS THAT WAS OUR TIME.

"OH... AND I FORGOT TO TELL YOU. WE HAVE A NAME FOR OURSELVES. SOMETHING KINDA SPIFFY AND SPOOKY... SOMETHING THAT'LL STRIKE FEAR IN THE HEARTS OF COWARDLY VILLAINS EVERYWHERE.

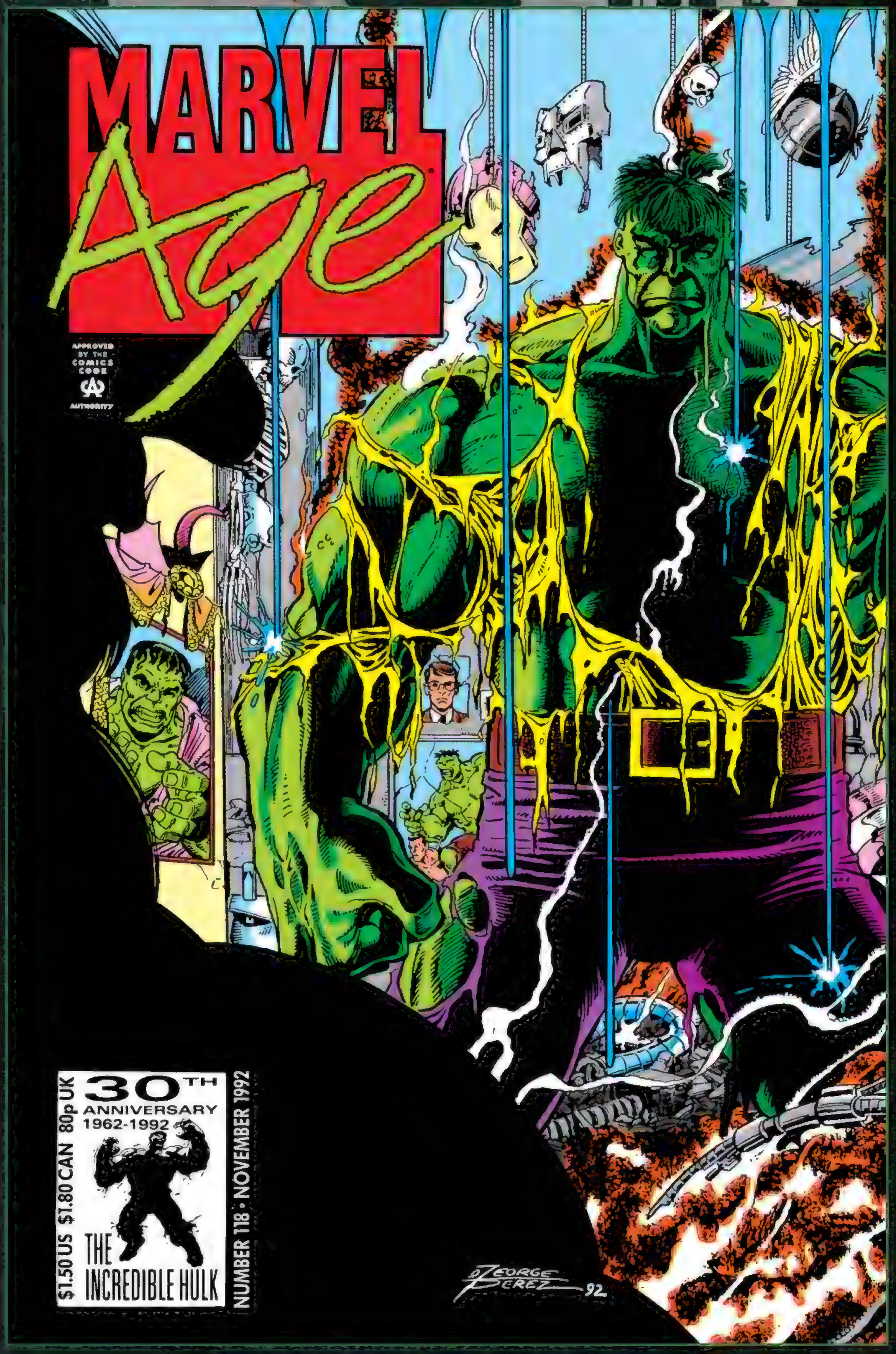
"I READ THAT SOMEWHERE.

"YOU KNOW WHAT WE CALL OURSELVES?

"THE ABOMINATIONS.

"WE'RE SO COOL."

TH--TH--TH--THAT'S ALL, FOLKS.



Marvel Age #118 cover by **George Pérez** & **Joe Caponsacco**

Hulk: Future Imperfect TPB (1st edition) cover by **George Pérez**

Hulk: Future Imperfect limited-edition HC cover by **George Pérez**

Hulk: Future Imperfect limited-edition HC Hulk & Maestro portraits by **Tom Smith**

Hulk: Future Imperfect limited-edition HC
foreword by **Bobbie Chase**

Behind the Scenes with *Hulk: Future Imperfect* or "Why *Imperfect* Was So Perfect"

Hulk: Future Imperfect was truly the perfect project to work on. My thanks go to Peter David and George Pérez for creating this wonderful work. But they also must go to artist Sam Kieth for getting the ball rolling. Years back Sam used to send me samples of the Hulk, with notes saying "I love this character. I want to draw this character." And it was with Sam in mind that this project was originally conceived.

After Peter and Sam had enjoyed working on *Hulk #368*, they decided to pursue a special project together. We'd never done one for the Hulk before, and I realized this was the perfect team to do it! Peter had a wonderful idea for a "Hulk in an alternate future" story and Sam did this great sketch of the Maestro. So the three of us sat down at lunch at the San Diego Comic Convention and watched Peter pull the pièce de résistance, that wonderful gamma explosion ending, out of his head.

The 30th Anniversary of the Hulk was approaching, the timing was perfect, and everything was going smoothly for Sam to start…

…when the dream shattered, and Sam had to back out, much to his regret and ours. Our hopes were dashed and Peter and I moped about our dreams being destroyed…

…when George Pérez called Peter! Did the man read our minds? He actually told Peter he wanted to work with him sometime, and could Peter keep George in mind? And yes, he had some free time now. So Peter told me to call George, and I did (don't I work hard?). Peter quickly put the project together, reworking the things to make the perfect David/Pérez project, and the rest is in print for public enjoyment.

As you can see, I worked very hard at making this project perfect! As I recall, the first issue even printed and shipped to the stores a week early — truly an editor's perfect dream project. *Hmmm.* This sounds crazy. Maybe it wasn't a dream. Maybe it was a hallucination! Or maybe an alternate history!

— **Bobbie Chase**

Hulk: Future Imperfect TPB
afterword by **George Pérez**

For those of you who have read and enjoyed *Future Imperfect*, let me just make clear that there is one person who deserves special credit for getting me involved in this project in the first place: my lovely wife, Carol Flynn. While I was aware and appreciative of Peter David's comics work, it was Carol's positive regard toward Peter's prose work, particularly his *Star Trek* novels, that prompted me to contact him about possibly doing a comics project together. Carol, a voracious reader, is usually quite critical, so her endorsement of Peter really said something to me. So, in this all-too-rare instance when an artist sought out a writer, as opposed to vice versa, the result was *Future Imperfect*, proving my wife's faith wholly justified.

Future Imperfect ranks as the longest story to date that I have ever penciled and inked and provided me with not only a chance to create some snazzy visuals (including Peter's museum sequence, my personal fave), but also served as a comeback for me after a rather spotty period wherein little story art of mine appeared. Most importantly, the book created a professional relationship with Peter that blossomed into yet another well-received collaboration, *Sachs & Violens*. Whatever other projects Peter and I do, either together or apart, there will always be a special place in my heart for *Future Imperfect*.

Thanks, Peter, for wanting to work with me. Thanks, Bobbie and everyone at Marvel, for wanting to print it. And thanks, Carol, for instigating it all.

— **George Pérez**

Hulk: Future Imperfect Limited-Edition HC
afterword by **Peter David**

I must have done something right with *Future Imperfect*. This is the third time I've written about it (the first two being the cover copy for the original series and the commentary for the trade paperback collection).

However, I'm now running into the danger of repeating myself. I should try to refrain from this since repetition, like clichés, should be avoided like the plague.

In the past, I've discussed how *Future Imperfect* came to be. How the plot had floated around for a couple of years when, out of the blue, George Pérez called me up and said he'd be interested in working with me. I immediately called Bobbie Chase and within an hour or so of George's suggesting a possible in-the-future collaboration, he suddenly found himself with an in-hand project.

After *Future Imperfect* wrapped, George made the mistake of calling me and saying, "Y'know, I'd love to work with you on something else sometime," and from that came *Sachs and Violens*. At this point, George knows better than to say that to me anymore.

So instead of rehashing all that (he said craftily), I thought I'd discuss some of the most often asked questions that *Future Imperfect* prompted:

Who came up with what in the Trophy Room? I thought it would be fun to do a sequence tied to Rick Jones' long history in the Marvel Universe. I had even begun to play off it in the monthly title, in which we had seen that Rick has such souvenirs in his apartment as Captain Marvel's nega-bands (as a planter). So I expanded the notion for the purpose of *Future Imperfect*. What I indicated in my plot — in describing the double-paged shot that was our introduction — was as follows:

Interior of Rick's trophy room. It is crammed, floor to ceiling, with all manner of props and memorabilia from the Marvel Universe including, but not limited to: Wolverine's skeleton, Cap's shield, Thor's hammer, the Surfer's board (broken).

That, plus the indication of the urns with ashes (and one or two items suggested in a phone call), was my entire contribution to the Trophy Room. Everything else came from George, whose attention to detail and encyclopedic knowledge of Marvel's props gave fans something to stare at for hours, always finding new little things tossed in.

Indeed, George came up with most of the little gags and stuff that you'll notice in the backgrounds.

Is there going to be a sequel? In a manner of speaking, yes. There's a sequence in *Future Imperfect* in which Rick Jones has a shower interrupted, in the 1990s, by the unexpected presence of Janis. This sequence was repeated, line for line (and even shot by shot) in *Hulk #415*, a year later, thus bringing *Future Imperfect* solidly into continuity. And the rest of the story happened in between issues *#416* and *#417*. Since then, the Maestro, and the fearful possible future that awaits him, has never been too far from the Hulk's mind. So, in a sense, every issue of *The Incredible Hulk* since *#415* has been a follow-up to *Future Imperfect*, giving us the longest sequel in Marvel history.

I've got money to burn and I'll buy anything you and George Pérez are connected with; so when is there going to be a high-priced, super-fancy collection of *Future Imperfect*? Why, you lucky stiff. Look no further.

— **Peter David**

Hulk: The End Premiere HC introduction excerpt by **Peter David**

"I don't want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve it through not dying."
—Woody Allen

People dream about living forever, or at least living extensively beyond the less-than-a-century that most of us are accorded. Actually, older people dream about it; youth tends to think about such things little if at all. Whether they're doing heart-stopping tricks with skateboards or vaulting fearlessly between subway cars, the inner "id" of the young seems to have very little grasp of its own mortality.

But adults strive in their own ways to thwart the inevitable. We dye our hair to remove any signs of gray, buy muscle cars when we hit a midlife crisis and seek out plastic surgeons to smooth out wrinkles or remove excess flab. In our hearts, though, we know we're fighting a losing battle. Sooner or later, even the most ambitious strides toward immortality will be tripped up, and down we'll go.

For writers, our work is our swing at immortality. Although Woody's point of view seems reasonable, the things we write are our bid for having our names, at least, survive. Our words, our thoughts, the stories we have to tell have the potential to span generations, even centuries, and affect how people view the world and themselves long after we'd have the opportunity to influence them, long after we're dust. When you're reading a novel that came out in the 16th century (yes, I'm looking at you, *Don Quixote*), you are — in a way — time-traveling. You are exploring the mind of someone who died hundreds of years ago. And it's a two-way trip, because he is reaching across time and space to share his thoughts and dreams with you as well. Sharing them with a future world that he would doubtless find overwhelming.

That's why I'm always pleased when Marvel collects my earlier work in some sort of more "permanent" format such as this. It not only exposes new audiences to stories that they may have missed when they first saw publication, but they are one more brick in the wall of my own bid at immortality.

And how appropriate it is, in this particular case, since both stories [*Hulk: Future Imperfect* and *Hulk: The End*] focus on the subject of extended life. Neither paints a particularly rosy picture, so perhaps we should all consider ourselves fortunate that true immortality is not a burden with which any of us will have to deal.

Future Imperfect had its origins in a meeting I had with then-Hulk editor Bobbie Chase. Bobbie was interested in working with a European artist who specialized in rendering dystopian futures. Could I, she inquired, come up with some sort of Hulk tale that would involve such a world? After giving the matter some thought, I opted for the notion of flopping the concept of *Terminator*. The glimpses of the future we had in those films seemed pretty darned dystopian to me…as far from utopia as one could get, really. So I thought it would be interesting to do what those films had not: Take the protagonists and portray them in that future world rather than have denizens of that world come here.

The artist whom Bobbie originally wanted for the project dropped out for reasons I never learned, but Bobbie liked the plot I'd developed enough to champion the idea of going ahead with the story. Unfortunately, we didn't have an artist.

In one of the most astounding moments of serendipity in my entire career, I happened to run into George Pérez at a docs in a box in Queens, NY — one of those clinic-type places where you can get walk-in medical attention. I was bringing one of my kids in to deal with a childhood ailment, and George was there for whatever (never asked; none of my business). We got to talking, and George said, "You know, I'd love to work with you on something if you ever have a project in the works." Instantly seizing the opportunity, I told him about *Future Imperfect*. George loved the idea of the comic. I would have whipped out my cell phone and called Bobbie Chase right then and there except cell phones didn't really exist yet. So I had to wait until I got home to tell Bobbie that, if we wanted him, George was aboard.

One cannot say enough about George's contribution to the series: His monumental storytelling sense, his legendary attention to detail. George was game for anything. When he sent me the pencils of the two-page crowd scene in the first issue, I said, "You know what it needs? Waldo from *Where's Waldo*." When we got the inked version, there was Waldo. Yes, he's really in there — no, I'm not kidding. Go find him. And then there's Rick Jones' trophy room. I feel confident in saying that only Pérez could have pulled it off.

It should be noted that as soon as George finished *Future Imperfect*, he said, "And if you ever have any other project you want to do…" This led directly to our other well-known collaboration, *Sachs & Violens*, characters with such staying power that they're currently running around in *Fallen Angel* from IDW (shameless non-Marvel plug).

The Hulk has always represented both the best and worst of us: Dedication to those who are friends, endless resentment to those who are enemies and boundless rage against that which gets in our way or tries to hurt us. Who better to star in stories that focus on the extremes of loneliness, frustration and anger that can accompany the incredible solitude old age can bring? Who better than the monster who is "id" unleashed, knowing only that he wants what he wants when he wants it? The eternal teenager, trapped in eternity.

And if you happen to be reading this introduction a hundred years from now: Greetings from the past. Sorry about the whole global-warming thing.

Peter David
Long Island, NY, November 2007

Hulk: Future Imperfect TPB (2nd edition) cover by **George Pérez** & **Veronica Gandini**

Maestro: Future Imperfect — Marvel Tales cover by **InHyuk Lee**

Maestro: Future Imperfect — Marvel Tales
introduction by **Ralph Macchio**

welcome to MARVEL TALES
bringing you the best from the house of ideas!

Every issue spotlights fan-favorite characters, features timeless stories and highlights the most impressive talent from the past eight decades. Your garrulous guide to these Marvel masterworks is Reliable Ralph Macchio...

Way back in the early 1990s, bleak, barren, barbaric futures seemed all the rage in cinema, from James Cameron's *Terminator* films to Mel Gibson's *Road Warrior* pictures. There was definitely something...dystopian...in the air. Around that period, then-*Incredible Hulk* Editor Bobbie Chase planned a comic with a European artist whose specialty was illustrating ravaged futuristic landscapes. She spoke to writer Peter David, who was in the midst of a seminal, long-running tenure on the *Hulk*, and asked if he could write a Hulk tale that would incorporate such a dystopian future. Chase, David and a passel of fine pencilers had already made ol' Greenskin's title a monthly must-have on every comics fancier's list. David discovered depths of character complexity, not only in his emerald-hued protagonist but also in the cast that surrounded him, that no one had ever imagined. The outrageous ideas and storylines David presented for this title seemed endless—and they worked! Chase, one of the finer editors ever at Marvel, toiled hand-in-glove with peerless Peter in harnessing his creative energies to the fullest for many years. Kudos to them both.

Apparently, David dwelled on Chase's request for a dystopian saga, and the result of his cogitation is the masterpiece you're soon to savor: "Future Imperfect!" David decided to do a switch on *Terminator* by having most of the story occur in the future rather than have those denizens come to our present. I've always felt this stellar story was a logical outgrowth of where David had taken the Jade Giant in the pages of his own title. On its most basic level, the concept of the Hulk is very similar to that of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*: the unleashed id. All the base impulses and desires we normally repress burst forth in the persona of a Hyde or Hulk. Whereas Stevenson's classic was a single tale, the Hulk is a character in a continuing series, which allowed for an ever more elaborate examination of the id/ego duality. Thus, we've had a Hulk with the intelligence of Bruce Banner, if not his mild temperament, and a Hulk absent even a fraction of intellect—pure rage. One of David's more notable variations on the id theme is Joe Fixit, a gray-skinned version of the Hulk who's actually a Las Vegas crime lord, complete with suit jacket and tie. David has taken us far from the original Stan Lee/Jack Kirby version, who only emerged from Bruce Banner at night and just wanted to be left alone among the steppes of the New Mexican desert.

And that brings us to the Maestro, yet another in the many incarnations of our Hulk, sporting a graying beard, horned headdress and royal cloak. Wow! Here is a being who created a city out of the ruins of an atomic war; a war he points out was brought about by a so-called advanced humanity. The Maestro makes a compelling case to his younger version that until he lives through the near-century of time that will lead to the Maestro's creation, it's woefully unfair to judge him. While humankind hounded the Hulk, calling him the monster, he wasn't the one who brought about the end of civilization, nor was it an alien attack. Puny humans were responsible. It was the Maestro who built the city of Dystopia and saved the remnants of humanity from possible extinction. True, he lords it over them from his emerald castle, but the Maestro considers that acceptable payback for humankind's decades of attacks upon him. Turnabout is fair play, as the saying goes.

David tapped into a fascinating conceit: Encountering one's future self and all the ramifications that go with it. How could you defeat a version of yourself that already knows every move you're going to make, every tactic and strategy you'll employ? This is the dilemma our present-day Hulk faces in confronting the malevolent Maestro. It's truly rare that the Hulk is the underdog in any physical conflict. But he decidedly is here and you True Believers are in for a real treat when you see how he copes with it. The Hulk is forced to look into a mirror in "Future Imperfect" and see what he could become given the proper circumstances. Ultimately, he is as much a survivor as his malignant future self. The present-day Hulk who inhabits this story isn't the dimwitted, monosyllabic beast with who we're familiar. No, this green-skinned goliath is highly intelligent and fully capable of grasping the dangerous reality into which he's been plunged. What brought him to this almost hundred year future—and who wanted him there—are revelations I won't spoil for you. They are all part of this wondrous tapestry woven by master scrivener Peter David, who understands what motivates the Hulk as well as any writer in our business.

However, he wasn't alone in bringing this stunning saga to life. He had a first-rate collaborator, a penciler whose graphic approach to the comics medium never goes out of style—the legendary George Pérez! The artist originally slated for the project suddenly became unavailable, but Chase, being no fool, knew she had a real gem on her hands with "Future Imperfect," so the search was on for a substitute penciler. Serendipitously, George's lovely wife, Carol, was a huge fan of Peter David's *Star Trek* prose novels. She convinced her hubby to call David and seek out a project with him. Because "Future Imperfect" had been sitting on the shelf for many months, the timing was spot-on. Pérez knows the Marvel Universe intimately. One of his many strengths is his uncanny attention to detail. While David called for several items in the wonderful spread of the trophy room, it was Pérez who added the bulk of the memorabilia therein. And you could stare at the spread of Dystopia for an hour and not take it all in. It's staggering. The look of the Maestro, the action sequences, harsh landscapes, etc.—all were brought to vibrant, visual life by the potent Pérez pencils. Having collaborated with Pérez myself on a Black Widow limited series, I can say that his ability to move a story forward is exceptional. He gives even conversational scenes an unsurpassed dynamic quality. All of his awesome artistic advantages come into play, and you will be immediately drawn into this strange new world. George, my hat is off to you once again.

Marvel knew it had a winner on its hands when *Hulk: Future Imperfect* was completed. It first saw print in a two-issue Prestige Format title in 1992, on slick paper with a cardstock cover. Now our magnificent *Marvel Tales* title proudly presents both parts in a single, pulse-pounding package for your supreme enjoyment. Let's get set to time travel some ninety years ahead to a little town affectionately called Dystopia and mix quietly with the locals. Just two things to remember: Keep your wallet in your front pocket and watch out for the Gravity Police. They know how to take you down...down...down.

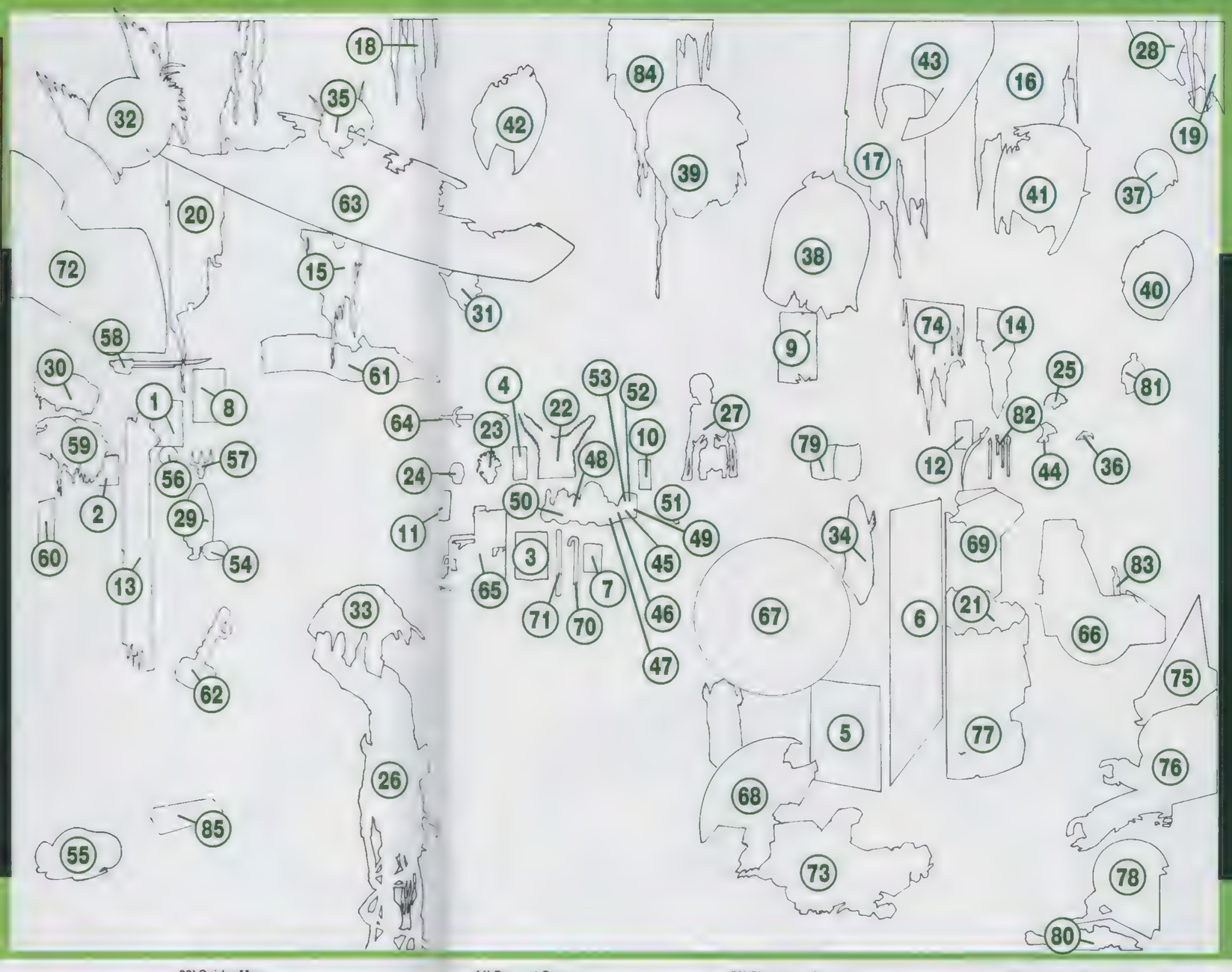
Enjoy,

Ralph Macchio

Ralph Macchio

The "TROPHY ROOM" as it was euphemistically dubbed quickly became infamous for its many hidden trinkets. Master storyteller George Perez outdid himself with his uncanny knowledge of Marvel (and other companies') Comic Book lore by hiding in plain sight dozens of icons and items relating to well-known characters. George's attention to artistic detail has sent many a fan into hours of search for these hidden treasures.

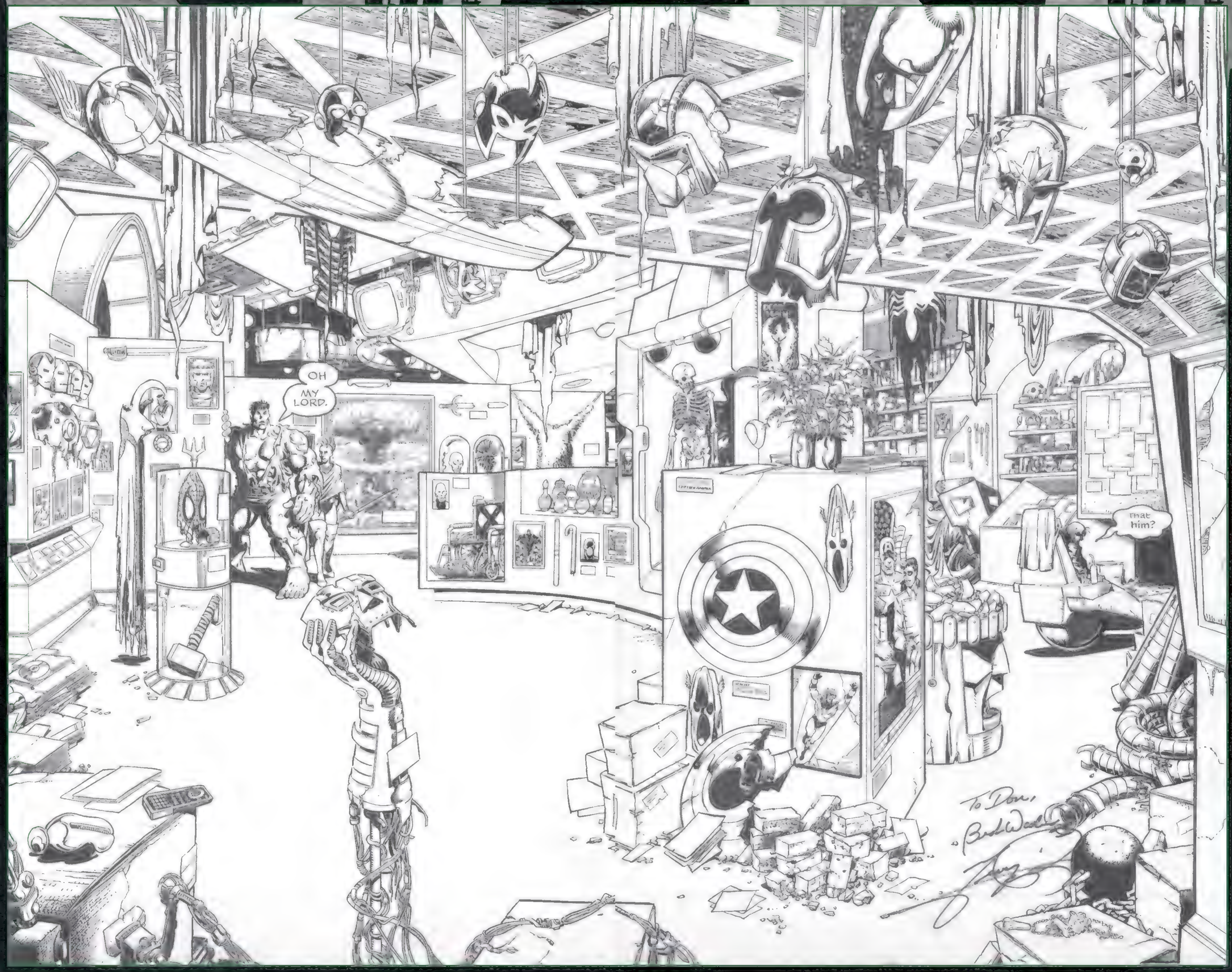
For the first time anywhere, we present the definitive list compiled by MARVEL LIMITED staff. Follow the key on the right and below to identify the items.



1) Doctor Strange
2) Jarvis
3) Inhumans
4) The Beast
5) Captain Mar-Vell
6) Captain America and Rick Jones as Bucky IV
7) Daredevil
8) Shatterstar
9) Phoenix
10) Wolverine
11) Prof. Charles Xavier
12) Hawkeye
13) Dr. Strange
14) Scarlet Witch
15) Cloak
16) Mole Man
17) Quasar
18) Powerful magician from another Dimensional Continuity
19) Hobgoblin
20) Strange visitor from another planet
21) Thing's skin
22) Beast's pelt
23) Warlock's head (New Mutants' version)
24) Vision's head
25) Red Skull's skull
26) Deathlok's right arm
27) Wolverine's skeleton
28) Ultron's head
29) Spider-Man
30) Iron Man armor
31) Sunfire
32) Thor helmet
33) Dr. Doom
34) Captain America
35) USAgent
36) Tiara from an island amazon princess
37) Ant-Man
38) Magneto
39) Crimson Dynamo
40) Titanium Man
41) Nova
42) Black Knight
43) Wizard
44) Serpent Crown
45) Blob — ashes
46) Betty Banner — ashes
47) Wasp — ashes
48) Leader — ashes
49) Jean Grey — ashes
50) She-Hulk — ashes
51) Reed Richards (Sue's couldn't be located) — ashes
52) Franklin Richards — ashes
53) Sandman — ashes
54) Spider-Man's web-shooter
55) Cyclops' visor
56) Dr. Strange's amulet
57) Damon Hellstrom's trident
58) Shatterstar's sword
59) Two Iron Man Chest pieces
60) Diagram for Avengers' Quinjet
61) The Fantasti-Car
62) Thor's hammer
63) Silver Surfer's board
64) Black Knight's sword
65) Prof. X's original wheelchair
66) Prof. X's modern chair
67) Captain America's shield
68) USAgent's shield
69) Ghost Rider's motorcycle
70) Daredevil's billyclub
71) Mockingbird's club
72) Power source from another Dimensional Continuity
73) Bricks from Avengers Mansion
74) Spider-Woman's tunic
75) Stiltman's legs
76) Doctor Octopus' arms
77) Sentinel
78) The Absorbing Man's ball & chain
79) Captain Mar-Vell's bracelets
80) The Sons of the Tiger's amulets
81) Bottle city from a doomed planet
82) Hawkeye's bow, quiver & arrows
83) Wyatt Wingfoot's water bottle
84) Dark bat-like Avenger of the night
85) X-Men danger room remote control

Hulk: Future Imperfect #1 cover art by **George Pérez**

Hulk: Future Imperfect #2 cover art by **George Pérez**



Hulk: Future Imperfect #1, pages 26-27 art by **George Pérez**

Hulk: Future Imperfect #2, page 22 art by **George Pérez**

COURTESY OF HERITAGEAUCTIONS.COM

Incredible Hulk #461, page 17 art by **David Brewer** & **Andrew Pepoy**

COURTESY OF HERITAGEAUCTIONS.COM

Captain Marvel #27-30 combined covers by **J.H. Williams III** & **Jose Villarrubia**

Maestro: World War M #1 afterword by **Peter David**

The original Maestro story, "Future Imperfect," was drawn by legendary comic book artist George Pérez, who died of cancer in May 2022 during the production of this miniseries. Written after George had announced his illness but before he passed away, here Peter David shared a few words about his collaborator and friend, the one and only George Pérez.

"By George"

My first exposure to George Pérez was pretty much the same as yours: reading his work in the pages of comic books. He was doing AVENGERS at the time, and his unique and detailed style was just starting to make its way into fan consciousness. Mostly, he was renowned for being the guy who had designed the costume for Jack of Hearts, which was so relentlessly complicated that pretty much no other artist could undertake it.

I don't remember the first time we met, but we must have encountered each other on the convention circuit or around the Marvel Comics offices, because one day my daughter Gwen, who was about 8 years old at the time, had sustained a minor injury and I was taking her to one of those "Docs in a Box" places (you know, one of those places that serve as an alternative to an emergency room), and George was sitting there in the waiting room. He recognized me instantly and was, I think, thrilled to have someone he knew to talk to.

Now, at that particular point in time, my editor on INCREDIBLE HULK, Bobbie Chase, was working with an artist who was renowned for producing post-apocalyptic tales. Bobbie asked if I could come up with a post-apocalyptic Hulk story, and I decided to flip the concept of *Terminator*. Instead of having a futuristic menace come to modern day, I would have the modern-day Hulk go into the future to deal with some threat. But what could that possible problem be that would uniquely require the Hulk to attend to it? That was when the Maestro strolled into my head to provide the challenge that only the Hulk could handle.

But the artist, for reasons that I never knew, dropped out of the project. That left me with a great story but no one to draw it.

So there I was, sitting and chatting with George, and George said, "You know, I love your work, Peter. I've always wanted to work on something with you." Immediately seeing an opportunity, I pitched the story to him, which I had entitled "Future Imperfect." George's eyes lit up; he seemed intrigued by it. He immediately agreed to sign on.

This was before the age of cell phones, so I had to wait until I got home before I phoned Bobbie and said, "I've got us an artist for 'Future Imperfect.' I offered him the gig and he's on board." Bobbie reminded me sternly that I was not in any position to offer work. I had clearly overstepped my bounds. "Who is it?" she finally got around to asking. "George Pérez," I said. A brief hesitation and then all the sternness was gone from her voice. "Okay," she said. "That's fine." One name got me out of trouble.

Well, George's work on "Future Imperfect" was instantly legendary. Most people to this day remember the establishing shot of Rick Jones' trophy room. Ninety-eight percent of the stuff in there all came from George's own copious knowledge of the Marvel Universe (not to mention his knowledge of another universe or two). And the final battle between the Hulk and Maestro remains one of my favorite Hulk sequences to this day.

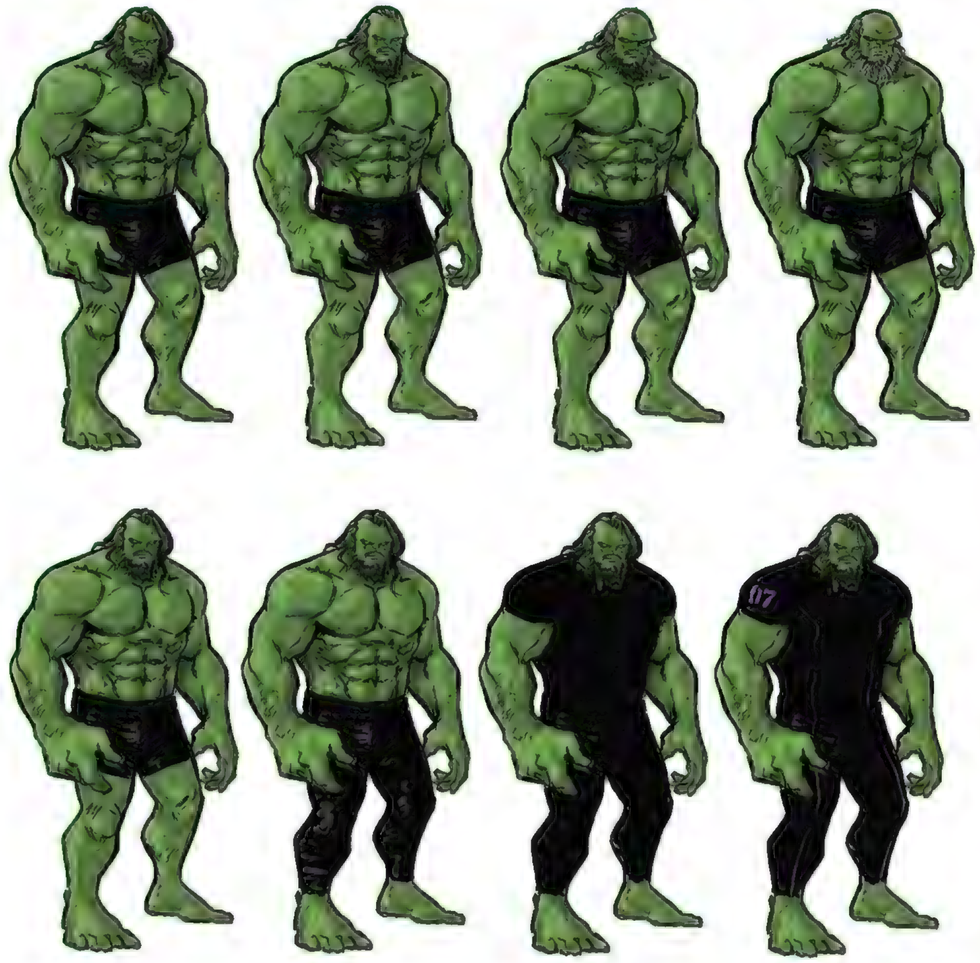
Once he finished that two-part story, George told me he'd loved working with me and was game to embark on another project. I pitched him a new project called SACHS AND VIOLENS, describing the protagonists of Jennifer Jean Sachs and Ernie "Violens" Schultz and their battle against—as Wikipedia calls it—an "underworld of depravity." George thought about it a moment and said, "Can Sachs be Latina?" Just that easily, Jennifer Jean became Juanita Jean, and the four-issue limited series was soon published by Epic Comics.

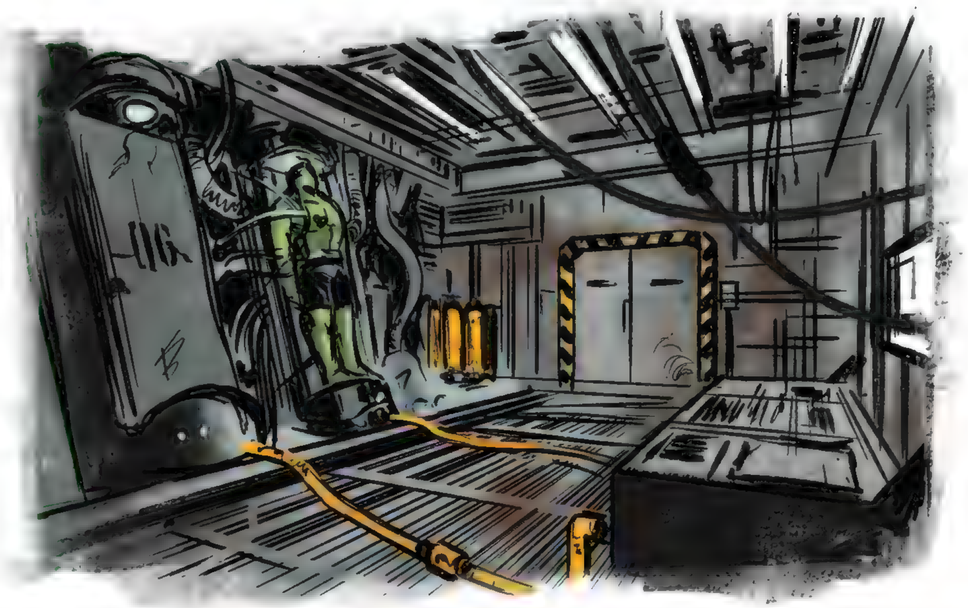
Those are my professional associations with George, which I will always remember. I've referred to George as a writer's artist, someone you don't have to worry about in terms of the illustrations because whatever he produces will make you look fantastic. Also, for a while there, we regularly teamed up to emcee the costume competition at Dragon Con, an annual sci-fi convention in Atlanta. One moment in our relationship that I will always recall is when I swung by George's table at Dragon Con one year and told him that I was portraying "Marryin' Sam" in a community theater production of the Li'l Abner musical. George immediately said, "No kidding! I did that too! I was Abner!" He instantly then sang, "Them city folk and we'uns are pretty much alike," and I immediately replied, "Though they ain't used to living in the sticks." And then we launched into a full rendition of "The Country's in the Very Best of Hands," which, if you don't know it, I suggest you look it up on YouTube and watch Peter Palmer and Stubby Kaye perform it from the film. Of course, if YouTube had existed back then, someone would have taped George and me singing it and put it up there for eternity.

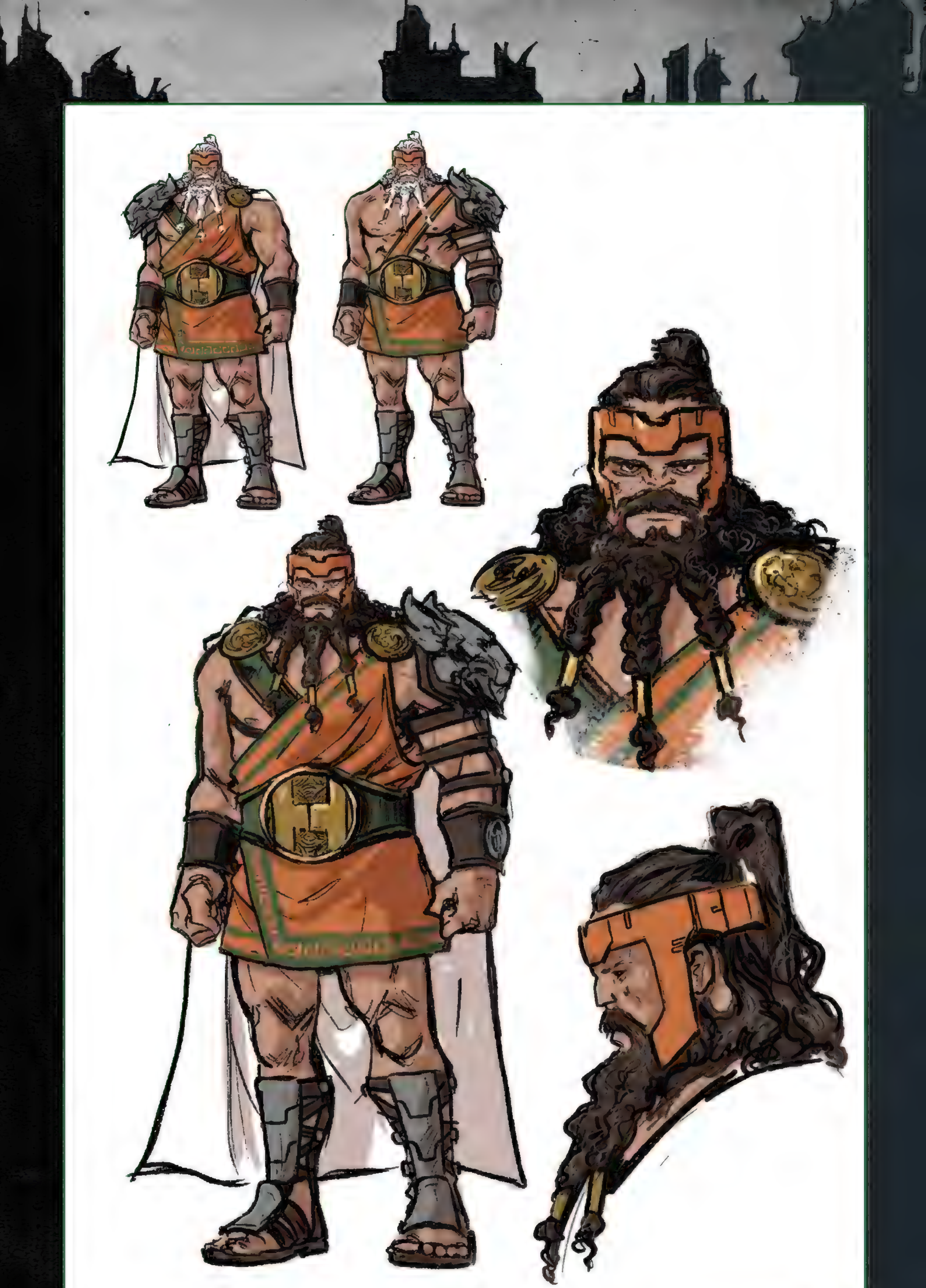
I am extremely lucky to have George in my life. He is a wonderful artist and, more, a great friend. If he still lived up in New York, I'd be visiting him on a weekly basis, but he's down in Florida and that's a problematic drive. But he is one of the greatest artists, and greatest men, that it has been my privilege to know.

—Peter David
Long Island, New York
January 4, 2022

Maestro concept designs by **Germán Peralta**





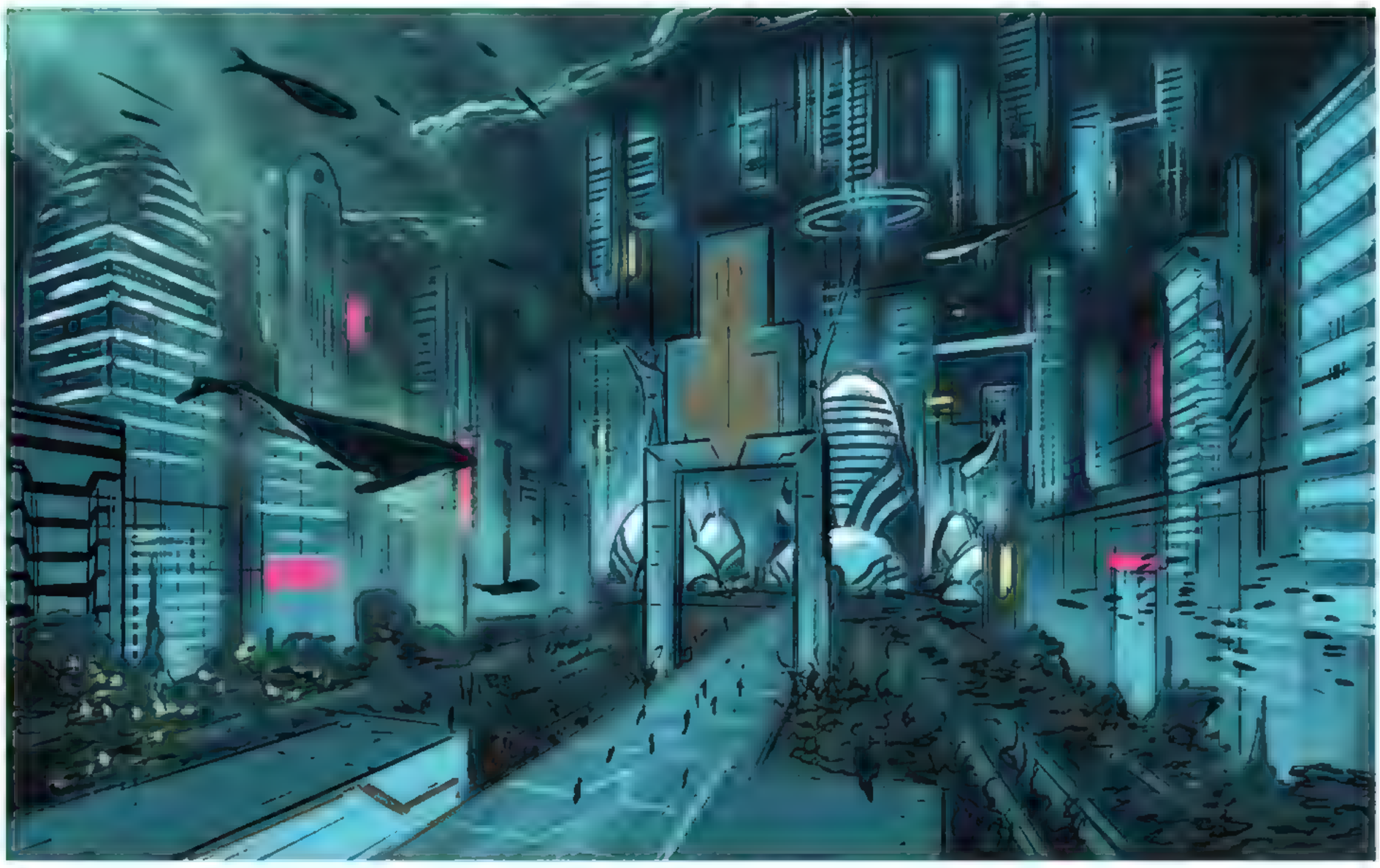


Maestro: World War M
concept designs by **Germán Peralta**

KRAKEN

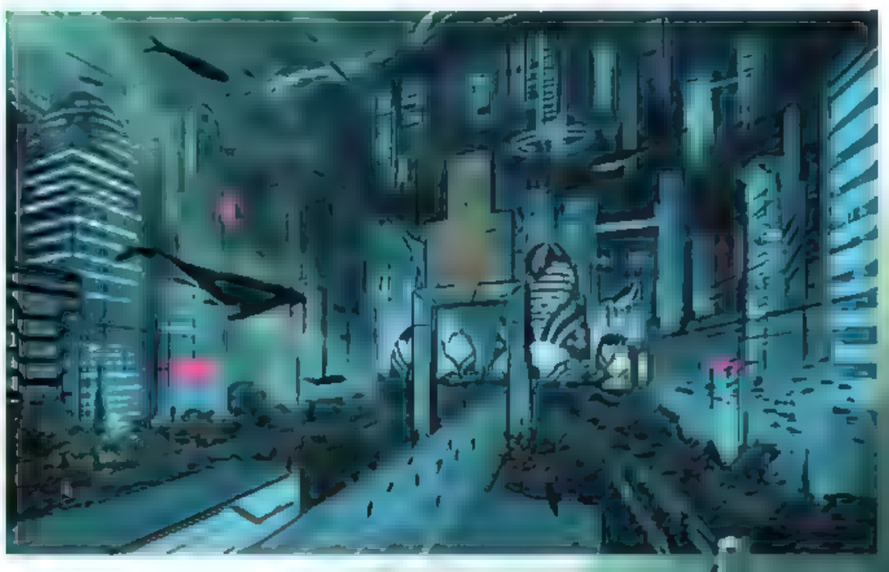
GIGANTO

PACIFICA



ATLANTEAN SOLDIERS (LEADER)

NAMOR'S THRONE ROOM



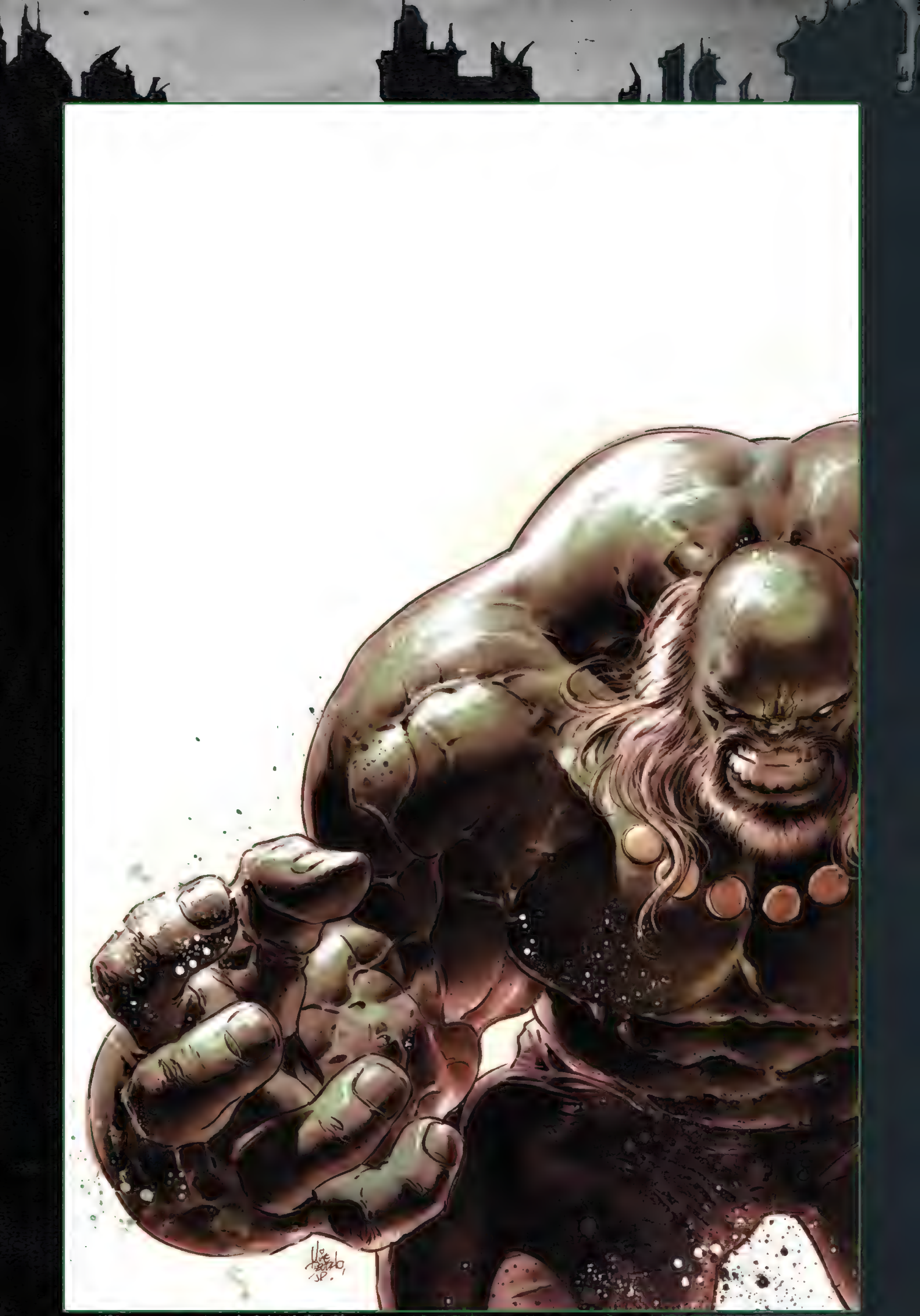
NAMOR CASTLE

Future Imperfect #1 variant by **Dale Keown** & **Jason Keith**

Future Imperfect #1 ant-size variant by **Dale Keown**

Future Imperfect #1 Ingwenible Hulk variant by **Nick Bradshaw** & **James Campbell**

Future Imperfect #2 variant by **Rafa Garres**



Future Imperfect #3 variant by **Mike Deodato Jr. & Rain Beredo**

Maestro #1 variant by **Yoon Lee**

Maestro #1 variant by **Ed McGuinness** & **Laura Martin**

Maestro #1 variant by **George Pérez** & **Jason Keith**

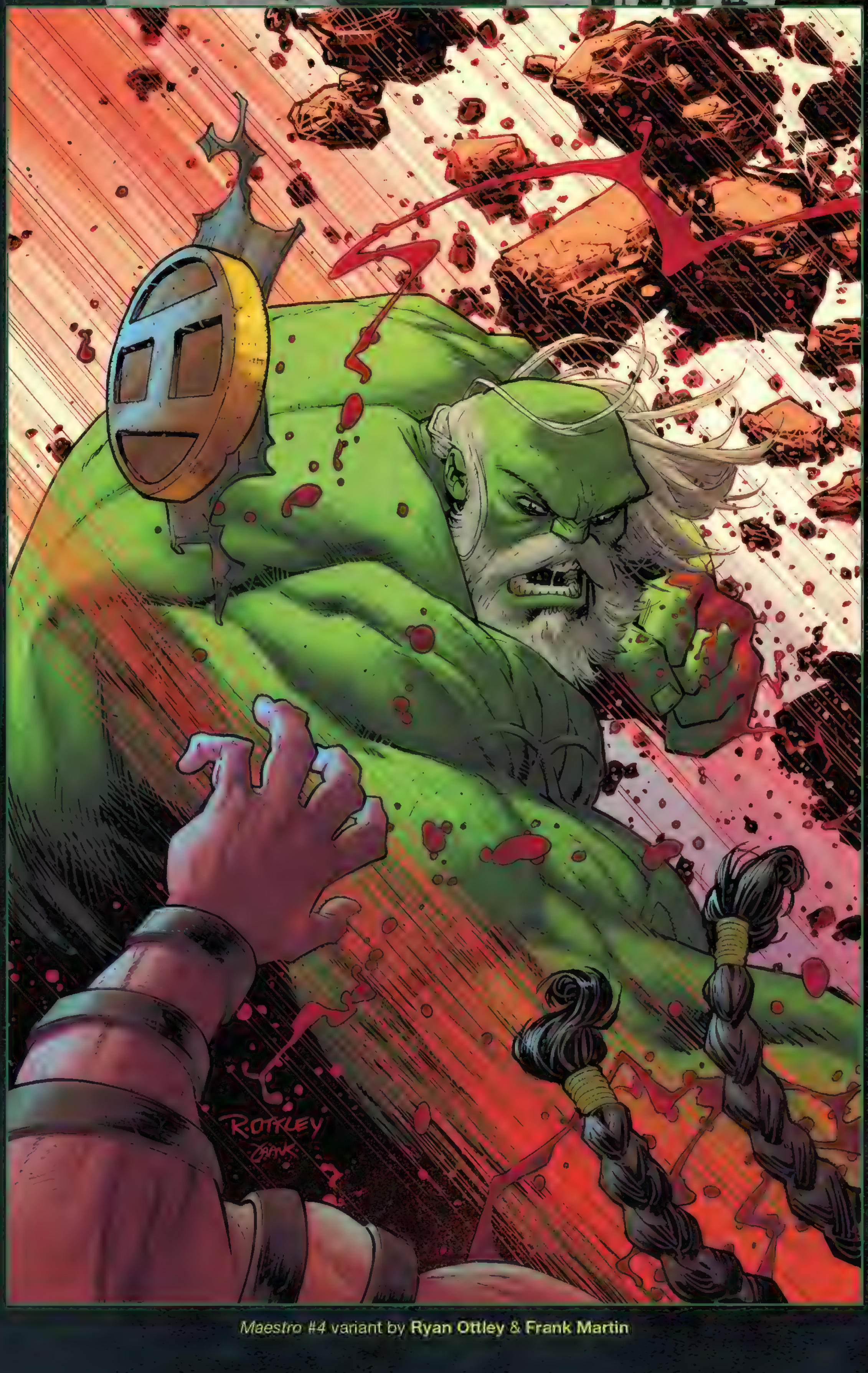
Maestro #1 variant by **Ron Lim** & **Israel Silva**

Maestro #1 variant by **Joe Bennett**, **Ruy José** & **Paul Mounts**

Maestro #1 variant by **Ron Garney** & **Matt Milla**

Maestro #2 variant by **George Pérez** & **Jason Keith**

Maestro #3 variant by **Tony Moore**



Maestro #4 variant by **Ryan Ottley** & **Frank Martin**

Maestro #5 variant by **Becky Cloonan**

Maestro: War & Pax #1 variant by **Ryan Stegman** & **Jason Keith**

Maestro: War & Pax #1 variant by **Ed McGuinness** & **Matthew Wilson**

Maestro: War & Pax #1 variant by **Joe Bennett**, **Ruy José** & **Rachelle Rosenberg**

Maestro: War & Pax #1 hidden gem variant by **Gary Frank**, **Cam Smith** & **Rachelle Rosenberg**

Maestro: War & Pax #1 variant by **Skottie Young**

Maestro: War & Pax #2 variant by **Carlos Pacheco**, **Rafael Fonteriz** & **Rachelle Rosenberg**

Maestro: War & Pax #3 variant by **Phil Jimenez** & **Jason Keith**

Maestro: War & Pax #4 variant by **Sanford Greene**

Maestro: War & Pax #5 variant by **Joshua Cassara** & **Dean White**

Maestro: World War M #1 variant by **Ed McGuinness** & **Laura Martin**

Maestro: World War M #1 variant by **Ron Lim** & **Israel Silva**

Maestro: World War M #1 variant by **Logan Lubera** & **Rachelle Rosenberg**

Maestro: World War M #2 variant by **InHyuk Lee**

Maestro: World War M #4 variant by **Peach Momoko**

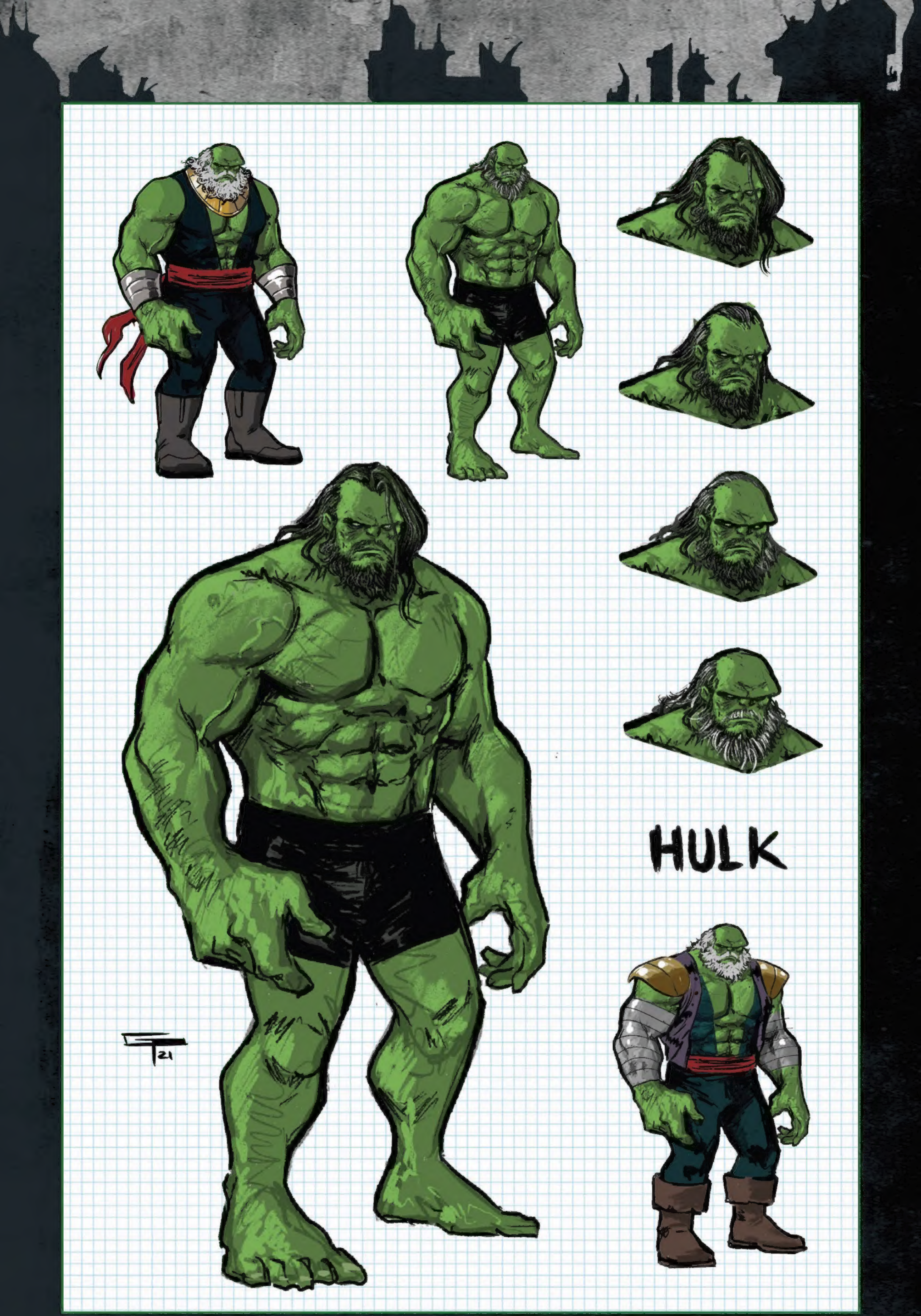
ABOMINATION

Maestro: World War M #1 design variant by **German Peralta**

Maestro: World War M #2 design variant by **Germán Peralta**

Maestro: World War M #3 design variant by **Germán Peralta**

Maestro: World War M #4 design variant by **Germán Peralta**



Maestro: World War M #5 design variant by **Germán Peralta**

THE INCREDIBLE HULK
future imperfect
HULK
BROKEN WORLDS
BOOK ONE
BRUCE BANNER IS BACK!
CAPTAIN MARVEL
SPIDER-MAN 2099
future imperfect #1
MAESTRO
THE TYRANT HULK OF A future imperfect!
Decades from now, one man — one monster — rules a ravaged Earth with a gamma fist. He is no longer Bruce Banner — no longer the Hulk. Now and forever, he is the Maestro — and a cataclysmic confrontation with his incredible past self is only the beginning! Experience celebrated writer Peter David's complete tales of the despotic Maestro — including the shocking truth of his rise to power — in one titanic tome!
COLLECTING HULK: FUTURE IMPERFECT #1-2, INCREDIBLE HULK (1968) #460-461, CAPTAIN MARVEL (1999) #27-30, SPIDER-MAN 2099 (2014) #9-10, FUTURE IMPERFECT #1-5, MAESTRO #1-5, MAESTRO: WAR AND PAX #1-5, MAESTRO: WORLD WAR M #1-5, EXILES (2001) #79-80, ABOMINATIONS #1-3, AND MATERIAL FROM HULK: BROKEN WORLDS AND SECRET WARS: BATTLEWORLD #4 — WRITTEN BY PETER DAVID WITH TONY BEDARD AND IVAN VELEZ; AND ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE PÉREZ, ADAM KUBERT, DAVID BREWER, CHRISCROSS, CHRIS BATISTA, WILL SLINEY, GREG LAND, DALE KEOWN, GERMÁN PERALTA, JAVIER PINA, PASQUAL FERRY, SEBASTIÁN CABROL, PAUL PELLETIER, ANGEL MEDINA, RODNEY BUCHEMI AND DANIEL VALADEZ.
T+
MARVEL